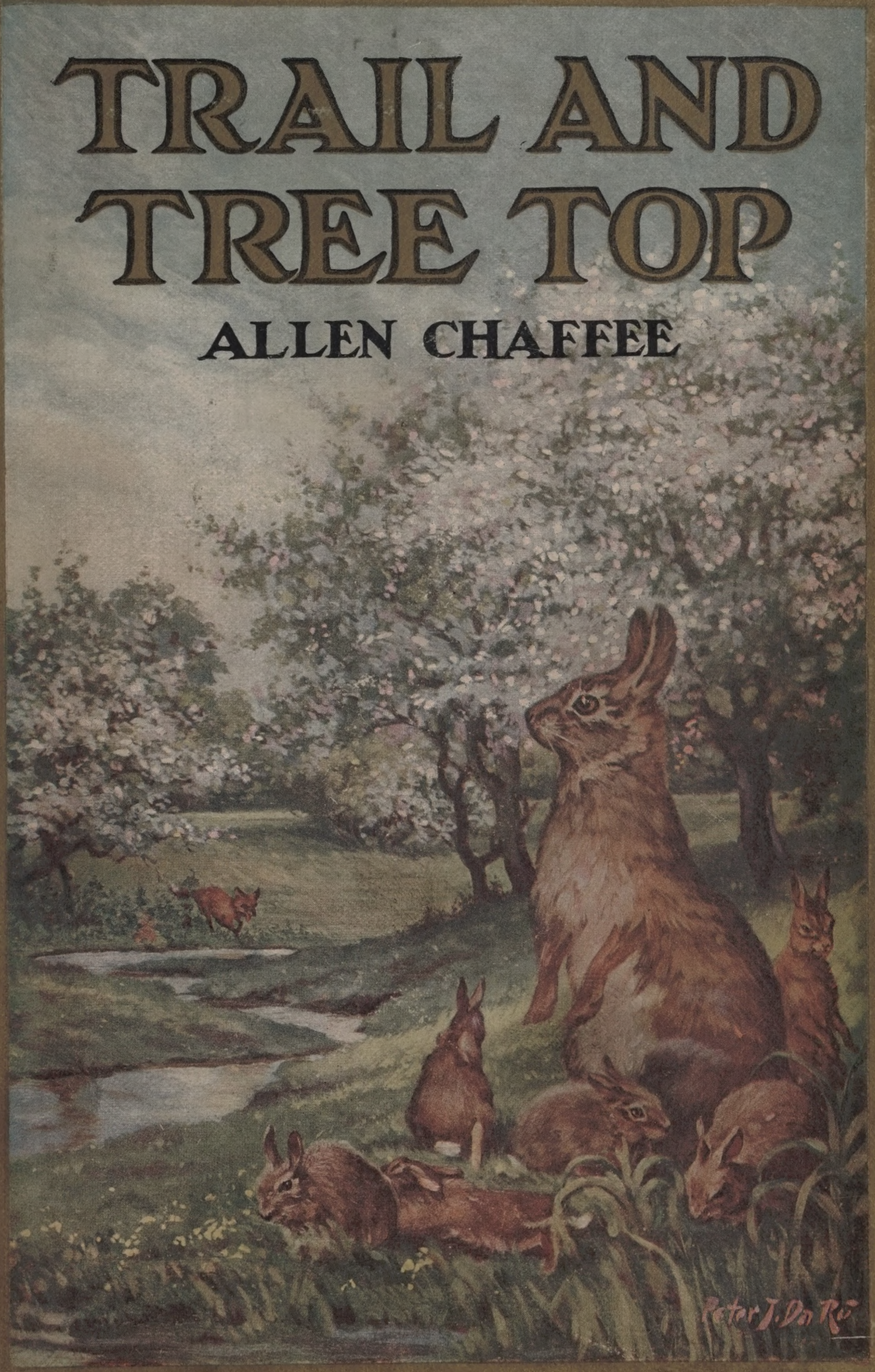
TRAIL AND TREE TOP

ALLEN CHAFFEE





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"There, now—quick!" For at this moment she spied a pudgy red-brown form creeping stealthily toward them.

TRAIL AND TREE TOP

By ALLEN CHAFFEE

Author of The Adventures of Twinkly Eyes,
The Little Black Bear.

Illustrated by PETER DA RU

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INTRODUCTION

HERE, in true-to-nature form, are some of the comic, daring or pathetic exploits of Mammy Cottontail, Jimmy Crow, and brave grumpy old Fatty Chuck, for whom Frisky Fox and others kept things so lively. And here is the Boy from the Valley Farm, who knew just what to do in some of the emergencies that befell his furred and feathered friends.

While there are a few big words for the grown-ups, they are all explained for the younger readers.

ALLEN CHAFFEE.

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To my Mother,
who finds in Nature
one of the greatest
awards of life.

Trail and Tree Top

I

THE SIX NEW LITTLE BUNNIES

The sun rose red from behind the woods that fringed the Valley Farm.

The April air was like a drink from a mountain brook. And the awakening wood birds piped their first joyous notes.

Father Red Fox, and other hunters of the darkness, were just returning to their dens to sleep. And down in the meadow behind the Valley Farm, Mammy Cottontail, the little brown Hare, sat gazing proudly at her nestful of brown bunnies, half hidden under a mullein plant.

So still were they, and colored so like the soil, that Cooper Hawk, flying over-head, took them for clods of earth.

"Sh!" said Mammy, as Daddy Cottontail came hopping home with a big mouthful of pink sweet clover for her.

"Aren't they just too lovely for words?"

Daddy glanced proudly at the six wee forms, sleeping cuddled up together in the grass. Mammy had strewn dried grass over them till even Tattle-tale the Jay would have had to look close to make sure they were there.

"Now stand on guard while I feed them," said Mammy with a touch of her whiskers that Daddy understood without words.—And she stretched out beside them like a cat with her kittens, licking first one and then another of the tiny velvet heads, and nuzzling them all over to make quite sure they were all right.

And you never in all your life saw six cuter little round balls of fur, with their long pink-lined ears laid flat over their backs, and their wee black noses that wriggled and wriggled, as they tested the fragrances of the new strange world they found themselves in.

Then, suddenly, Mammy whistled under her breath, stiffening with fright. For down the wind came the faint ribbon of a musky odor, that told her Father Red Fox was headed their way.

"You stay right here," quavered Daddy.

"I'll go head him off!"

And with a valiant bound of his long hind legs he was leaping helter-skelter for the woods, where he cut straight across the fox's path.

As he had intended, the fox turned the instant he caught sight of him, his errand down toward the Valley Farm forgotten, and made for Daddy.

With heart thumping wildly at the risk he ran—for Red Fox could all but match his speed, pace for pace—he was off for the underbrush that would hide his fleeing form, so that he could camouflage against some mound of earth as brown as himself.

Up hill and down dale he dashed, here dodging behind a log, there trying to hide under a big skunk cabbage, but all to no avail. Father Red Fox was always close at his heels.

II

WRIGGLY NOSE LEARNS CAMOUFLAGE

Things certainly looked badly for Daddy Cottontail!

No matter how he turned and twisted, as he raced through the underbrush, Red Fox was always close at his heels! A moment more and those hungry jaws would snap over the brown bunny's back, and Mammy Cottontail and the babies would wait in vain in the nest in the meadow beyond the Valley Farm.

Daddy's wind was nearly gone. Finally a desperate idea came to him!

Quick as a flash he turned in his tracks and darted straight back between his pursuer's legs!

Before ever Father Red Fox recovered from his amazement, Daddy hurtled down into the swamp, where he was just able to balance on a tuft of grass that would have sunk under the larger animal.

There he waited, crouched down under a skunk cabbage, till Red Fox gave it up and went in search of easier game.

When Daddy returned home that night, his paws covered with swamp mud, he found Mammy all but crazy, she had been so worried. For Father Red Fox was certainly an enemy not easily outwitted, for all of Daddy's prowess at the running high jump.

As she had waited, huddled before the nest in the brown turf guarding its furry secrets, she had decided that the very minute Daddy got back they must teach the children cam-ou-flage. These were uncertain times at best, and when one cannot fight, and is too young to run away, the next best thing is to cam-ou-flage. That is,—to pretend to be a clod, or a stump, or a pile of brown leaves,—which is all cam-ou-flage really means to a bunny.

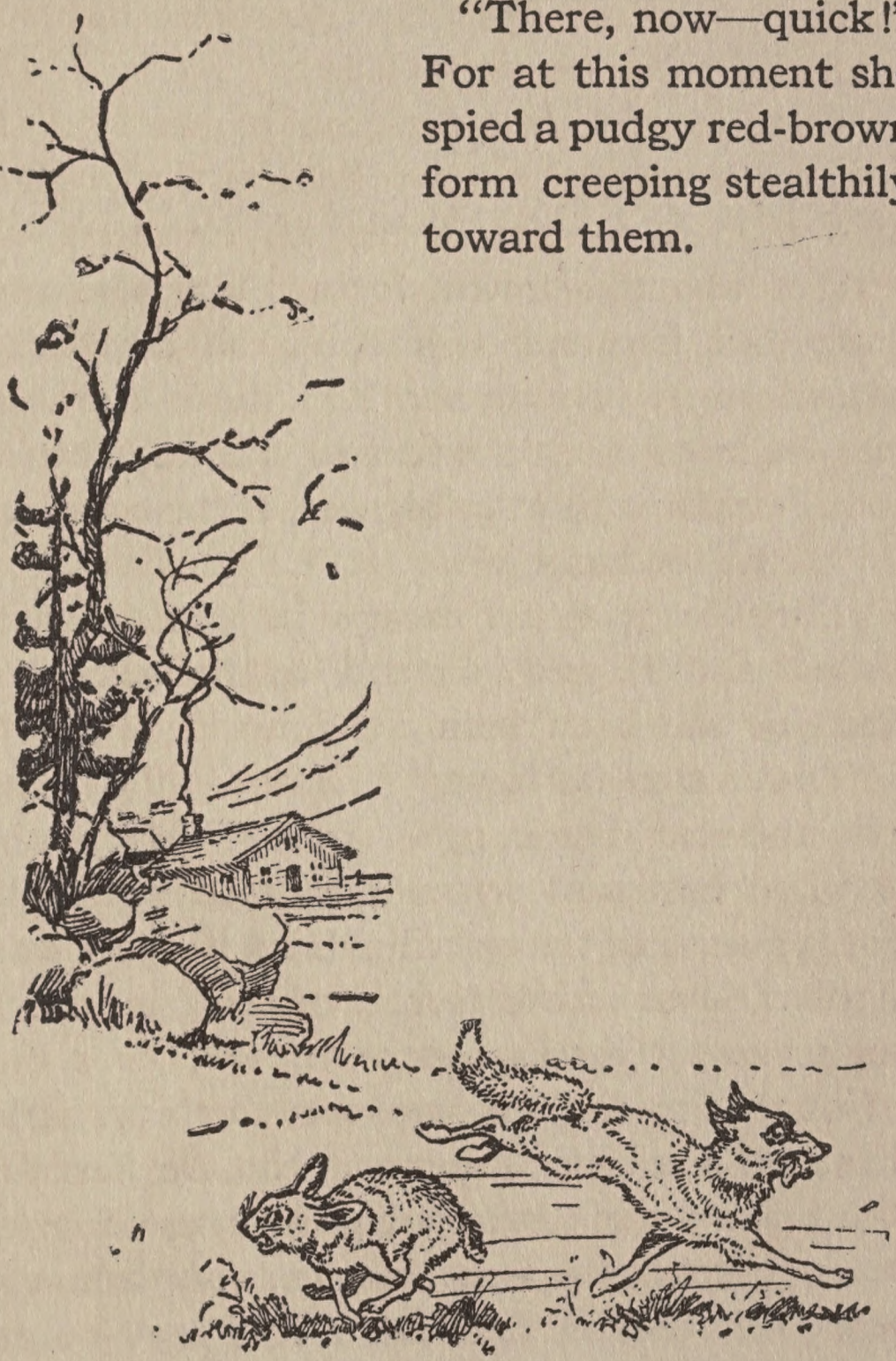
Wriggly Nose especially needed to learn camouflage, because he was so much larger and stronger than his brothers and sisters that already he showed a tendency to poke his little black nose into trouble. And the sooner he learned to hide, the longer he would

remain a secret from the enemies that surrounded them on every side.

That is why, one day, no sooner had the great red sun gone down behind the poplars, and the six babies begun to awaken, and squirm about and stretch their legs, and cock their ears for some sign of Mammy's thumpety-thumpety-thump outside, than they felt her nuzzling them over and urging them to come out for a little gallop across the cornfield.

"Now, Wriggly Nose, and Flap Ears, and Furtive Feet, and Fuzzy Wuzz, and Paddy Paws, and Hippity Skip," said Mammy, as soon as she had them lined up in a plowed furrow not too far away, "I want you children to remember one thing:

"The best way to escape when you see a fox, or a mink, or anything else that looks as if he wanted rabbit for breakfast, is just to keep perfectly still and pretend to be a clod of earth, or a little brown stone, or a hump on the root of a tree. Wherever you are, just fold back your ears, and shut your eyes all but a weenty crack,—so the whites won't show,—and lie as still as field mice, and may-be you won't be seen. That's cam-ou-flage.



"There, now—quick!" For at this moment she spied a pudgy red-brown form creeping stealthily toward them.

III

FRISKY FOX GOES HUNTING

Now the red-brown form that Mammy Cottontail had spied creeping so stealthily toward them just as she had the six young bunnies lined up in the furrow was none other than Frisky Fox,—the biggest, fattest pup in the Red Fox family.

"The best way to escape is just to keep perfectly still, and pretend to be a clod," Mammy had been telling them.

"That's cam-ou-flage."

So at her: "There, now—quick!" uttered in such a frightened whisper, every last little brown bunny of them folded back his ears and huddled down in the furrow of the corn-field, and kept as still as a mouse.

Not that mammy herself was the least little bit afraid of the fat fox pup. Not for herself! —But for the six brown babies crouching in the corn-field she was most uneasy, because they could neither fight nor run away. And even a young fox might catch such tiny



"He will be a mighty hunter" she thought.

rabbits if he but knew they were there.

As an actual fact, it was not the baby bunnies, after all, that Frisky Fox was stalking when he frightened Mammy Cottontail. It was Shadow Tail, the littlest of Mother Douglas Squirrel's family.

Not that Frisky was averse to catching anything that came his way! The impudent young wretch! Though as for chasing Mammy Cottontail, he knew better than to try, for his stubby legs were still too wobbly for him to have kept up with her for a minute.

Now Frisky had been making rapid strides ever since the Red Fox family had moved into the den on the hilltop. From barking at his brothers in the sharpest, sauciest kind of way, and romping and wrestling and bullying them nearly to pieces, and chewing up everything about the place he could possibly set his sharp new teeth in, he had entered the hunting field.

His first catch was a big fat beetle that he found hiding under a stone. But he deserved no credit for that,—the creature was simply too lazy and stupid even to try to get away.

The next day he caught an infant shrew

mouse, whose teeny squeak his sharp ears had heard as the creature tried to run from his hole.

The mouse was not yet old enough to run very fast, else Frisky never could have caught him, in-ex-pe-ri-enced as he was. None the less his mother rewarded him with a warm caress of her tongue, and he felt quite proud of himself.

"He will be a mighty hunter," she thought, as the pup tore his kill into just the right sized bites and ate it, first tossing each mouthful into the air, then springing to catch it in his open jaws.

"He will surely get himself into a lot of trouble at the rate he is going," growled Father Red Fox, watching him start off again.

And that is how he came to frighten Mammy Cottontail and the six wee bunnies trembling in the corn-field.

IV

WRIGGLY NOSE AND THE OWL

Meantime Mother Red Fox never dreamed that the nest in the edge of the meadow sheltered six baby bunnies, who lay hidden under the mullein plant, their hind legs growing longer and stronger every day, and the nest more crowded for them.

But Whoo Lee, the Great Horned Owl, had discovered the secret. Because one night Wriggly Nose, the boldest bunny, had waggled his ears just as Whoo Lee was studying the prospects for a hunt from a neighboring fence-post.

Of course, Mammy Cottontail had warned them all to keep perfectly quiet when she was gone. But then a great big spider had crawled up over the edge of the nest, and stared so hard that Wriggly Nose flapped his ears in the hope of scaring him away. It was at that very moment that the great owl's night-

seeing eyes had spied the movement under the grasses.

Now if anything in this world ever looked settled and done for, it was at that moment.

There wasn't the shadow of a doubt in Whoo Lee's mind but that he should sup on fillet of rabbit—and there wasn't the shadow of a doubt in the mind of the six brown bunnies about it either, when they heard the loud hiss he gave at that moment.

Of course they didn't know that if Whoo Lee had really been on the point of swooping down to nab them, the great bird would have slipped through the air without a sound. If Mammy Cottontail had been there, she would have breathed easier the instant she heard that hiss, because she would have known that he never hissed except at something he was afraid of.

As an actual fact, Whoo Lee was not the only prowler out that night. Thomas, the barnyard Cat, was also on a hunting tour, and as he moved with the silence of velvet, and Whoo Lee had both his round yellow eyes glued to the wavering grasses, he never so much as dreamed of a tom-cat away off there

on the fence between the woods and the meadow.

But Thomas, as luck would have it, leaped upon the great brown owl from behind at the very instant that Whoo Lee was lifting his silent wings for a swoop at Wriggly Nose.

Such an outcry as rose upon the quiet air! The owl promptly flung himself upon his back on the ground, defending himself with beak and claws, the while he hissed like a snake. The big tom-cat, his mouth full of feathers, tried to reach for a hold on the great bird's throat, spitting and yowling with mingled wrath and pain. But he quickly gave it up, having decided, after one good nip of the other's beak, that the game was not worth the candle.

How in all this wide world, he asked himself, as he raced back to the safe shelter of the barn, should he know that the bunch of feathers sitting on the fence was not one of the silly grouse hens that he sometimes found in the woods? How could anybody tell from the silky softness of that feathered back that such punishing beak and claws might be expected on the other side of the creature? So Thomas reasoned with himself as he sulked on

top of a rafter, licking his wound.

But Thomas had, all unknown, come along just in time to play the role of Fate for poor Wriggly Nose, quaking in his nest under the grasses. For the owl, his nerves jarred quite out of their usual calm, was sailing silently back into the deep woods before ever the five bunnies had found out what the noise was all about.

"Yes, you've escaped this time," said Mammy Cottontail, when she had heard the tale. "But mark my word for it, that owl knows where we are now, and he is not the bird to give it up so easily."



V

FORTUNE FAVORS THE BRAVE

"No, sir, you never can tell about a bunny. You'll find there's no two alike once, nor one alike twice," Mother Red Fox assured young Frisky as she entered the meadow with the five fox pups.

"But they're all alike in one way; they all rely on their heels.

"A hare can't fight—he can't back into a burrow and bare tooth or claw at the enemy, so he doesn't burrow at all. None but the newborn can spend their time in hiding, else who would keep the larder filled? And if a bunny is going to race for his life, he wants the open to kick his heels in. That is, of course, unless he can reach a briar patch."

"Well, there's a briar patch yonder," Frisky interrupted. "Why doesn't he stay in that all the time?"

"Use your wits, my son! You've got to use your wits if you really want to grow up

into a regular fox! I'm going to let you find that out for yourself."

"Now, you four pups stay where you are this time and watch. Frisky, see how I do it, then try it for yourself," and without more ado Mother Red Fox darted straight at a brown hum-mock that seemed to stand up above the surrounding level.

It proved to be Mammy Cottontail herself, for her sensitive black nose had already warned her of the approach of the musky-scented ones, and, anxious for her children's sakes, she had approached as near the enemy as she deemed it safe,—and nearer,—that she might give the warning thump-thump of her heels, and tell the six young bunnies which way to retreat.

"Hide, if you can," she had instructed them; "but should they spy you out, dash for the briar patch!"

Now, only the day before, Mammy Cottontail had led her six through the rabbit road that wound like a mystic maze through the sweet-briar vines on the edge of the woods. Thanks to the industry of Daddy and Mammy, and a score of uncles and cousins, a

narrow run-way had here been nibbled with pains-taking care. Each member of the cottontail fra-ter-ni-ty had taken his turn at cutting the stems of vines close to the ground, in a pathway just wide enough for a cottontail, and not one bit wider.

First a little road led in from the edge of the meadow. Shortly a new path branched off at right angles, and this one branched again. On and on they traveled through the maze, never following any one path to its conclusion, but turning this way and that, seem-ing-ly as fancy dic-ta-ted,till the little Cottontails would have been completely lost, had it not been for Mammy's scent, hot on the trail before them.

Mammy, of course, knew just where she was every minute, for had not she herself helped to lay out the green briar tunnels?

Wherefore, no sooner had Mother Red Fox spied Mammy in the moonlight than Mammy dashed straight for the shelter of the briar-patch, her pursuer scarce the length of one good leap behind her.

Could she make it? Her heart pounded as the steel springs in her hind legs sent her forward ten feet at every bound!

Would she make it? The six bunnies watching from their coverts asked themselves, with legs trembling under them at the red peril so close behind her.



VI

WRIGGLY NOSE DOES A TURN

Heart pounding against her ribs, lungs bursting with effort, and soft eyes wide with terror, Mammy Cottontail put all her strength into the great bounds that carried her nearer and nearer the maze of green-briar!

She had a very little head start of Mother Red Fox, and they were just nip and tuck for speed!

Ah, she had made it! She dashed in so feverishly that she tore her fur on a thorn, and all but went head on into the briars, instead of into the narrow rabbit road.

Here she at once breathed easier, though she no-wise relaxed her speed, for the fox was following fairly within snapping distance of her heels. Still, the narrow road was pretty hard on a full-grown fox, for the brambles combed her sides un-pity-ing-ly, im-pal-ing red tufts of fur to mark her progress.

Mammy turned this way and that, Mother Red Fox following with her nose. Then Mammy doubled on her tracks, while Mother Red Fox darted straight ahead, too bent on covering the ground to note that there was no longer any scent to guide her, till Mammy had had time to breathe and re-con-noi-tre for another ruse.

Then suddenly Mother Red Fox, seeing what had happened, (and from long experience with briar patches,) decided to withdraw down the first road that led outside. Then she would circle the patch and watch till Mammy should emerge! And she licked her sides ruefully where the thorns had taken toll.

Meantime what of Wriggly Nose and Paddy Paws and Furtive Feet and the rest of Mammy's brood?

No sooner had Mammy reached the briar-patch than Wriggly Nose espied young Frisky, the fox pup, sniffing in the direction of his own par-tic-ul-ar form; and though he knew by this time that he looked just like a tuft of withered grass on the little knoll from which he had his outlook, he thought it best to make his get-a-way.



"Ah! She made it."

So he started toward the briar patch in the way Mammy had just dem-on-stra-ted, trying his youthful best to make his untrained legs attempt the mon-u-men-tal leaps Mammy had been ex-e-cut-ing.

His first catch was a big fat beetle.

Whoo Lee had discovered the secret.

Could she make it? Her heart pounded,—turning three complete somersaults.



VII

WRIGGLY HEADS A MERRY CHASE

For a fact! Young Wriggly Nose was even more surprised than Frisky Fox, when he first tried that powerful spring of his long hind legs, for which the cottontail hares are famous.

For, losing his balance in mid-air, he turned three somersaults before ever he came down again!

Frisky was so interested watching the ma-noeuv-re that he forgot to chase him! Yes, sir, young Frisky Fox was so as-tound-ed at the way the brown bunny turned those som-er-saults that he forgot the chase in wondering if Wriggly Nose would ever come down again!

At the next leap Wriggly surprised himself again by bounding into the air full five times his height, and landing ten times the length of his body beyond,—an ordinary stunt for a cottontail, only he did not know it!

This was easy!—Now that he was growing ac-cus-tomed to the powers within him, he all but forgot his fear in the delight of the running high jump,—so much so, in fact, that he sped clear past the tiny run-way Mammy had taken into the briar patch, and had to take another further on.

Now, Mammy Cottontail had just begun to think her troubles over, having hidden so suc-cess-ful-ly in the briar-patch that Mother Red Fox had given up the chase.

But here was new cause for worry! Could Wriggly find his way safely through the briar-patch, or would young Frisky run him down before her very eyes?

No,—not if Wriggly's mother could prevent! There was but one thing to be done. Darting along the tangled runways, she dashed straight between pursuer and pursued. And because young Frisky got her scent so strong in his nostrils, he lost the fainter scent of the younger hare, and found he had nothing left to do but to follow Mammy herself.

The rest was easy, so far as Mammy was concerned. She had been clever enough to throw Frisky's mother off the trail, and she

soon had young Frisky so dis-cour-aged that he was glad enough to find his way out again into the open meadow.

Where was Wriggly, meanwhile? Having darted here and there and everywhere, just as he thought Mammy had the day before, without rhyme or reason, he soon found himself utterly lost. It was a mystic maze, indeed,—that briar patch,—with its little paths branching in every con-ceiv-a-ble direction.

Nothing short of long experience could have told him where he was, nor which way to turn.

He stopped and reared himself on his long hind legs, brown ears pointed forward, and wriggled his sen-si-tive nose.

What had become of Frisky Fox?

And where-ever *was* he, anyway, and what was going to happen next?

Little did he know who stood at that very moment peering at him from the path adjoining!

It was Mammy herself.

VIII

MAMMY COTTONTAIL TO THE RESCUE

Never had things looked quite so dark to Wriggly Nose, the little brown Hare, as they did at that moment!

Not only was he hopelessly lost in the briar patch, but he supposed young Frisky Fox was still hot on his trail.

So great had been his terror as he leaped through the little green roadways before his pursuer, that he had not seen Mammy Cottontail lead Frisky off in quite another direction. Nor could he know that Frisky had been forced to give it up, and find his way out of the briar patch as best he might.

No, to the little brown bunny panting at the turn of the run-way, it was his first real ad-ven-ture, and there wasn't a lonelier, more frightened little hare that side of Mount Olaf.

Then, rearing himself on his long hind legs to take a look about him, he suddenly saw a pair of bright eyes peering at him from the

path adjoining. He started with surprise. It was Mammy herself!

Sig-nall-ing him with sub-dued little taps of her heels, she cautiously directed him where to cross over to her side; and she was soon licking his scratched face re-as-sur-ing-ly.

"We're all right," she breathed into his long brown ear, her velvet nose laid close to his. "The foxes are both outside now, waiting for us to appear. But we'll fool them, we will! They'll have a long wait if they sit there till we leave this briar patch! If they are counting on rabbit for supper, they will go hungry this time,if Mammy knows anything about it!"

She rose to her hind legs to peek at Mother Red Fox and her son, who were trotting anxiously around and around the briar-patch.

"But, Mammy," quavered Wriggly Nose, still sniffing at the musky odor that clung to the air, "What if they should come back in after us again?"

"Child," said Mammy proudly, "Don't I know this place? If we have to run for it again, you just stay close at my heels, and we'll come out all right."

"Might as well get a bite of supper our-

selves," and she began nibbling the young briar shoots as far as she could reach.

As Wriggly's heart calmed down to normal, he once more became conscious of the sights and sounds and fragrances that had made the meadow such a happy place until the foxes came.

The bright moon shone down through the tangle of briars above their heads, glinting off the dew drops till every vine was strung with jewels.

The moist soil and the new, young grass gave out an alluring odor. To his sensitive nostrils there was just a hint of wild cherry blossoms in the fringe of the woods, and from Pollywog pond the song of the hylas mingled weirdly with the croaking of larger frogs.

A fat, brown toad came hopping down the little pathway, darting his barbed red tongue at every insect that crossed his path, and blinking as he swallowed.

A whirr of wings sounded softly overhead. Mammy suddenly rose again to peer off at the enemy.

"What is it?" gasped Wriggly nervously, as she gave a sudden start.

IX

THE OWL COMES BACK

Mammy Cottontail, the Hare, standing a-tip-toe in the briar patch as she took a look about, started violently. For just outside, in the moonlit meadow, stood Mother Red Fox and young Frisky Fox.

"Come!" Mammy was just signalling the little bunny at her side, with a nuzzling of of her brown, velvety nose. But for once her fears were groundless. The two foxes had had enough of the briar-patch for that time.

"I'm so hungry," Frisky Fox was whimpering. "If we can't have rabbit, why can't we go and catch frogs?"

"Come, then," agreed Mother Red Fox, licking her fur where she had scratched it in the briar-patch. "You've learned how *not* to chase a rabbit, anyway," and she trotted back to the four smaller pups, who waited like o-be-di-ent bright-eyed shadows just where she had left them.

Seven wriggling black noses, and seven pairs of long brown ears noted their departure, as the fox family trotted back across the meadow. Mammy and Wriggly Nose came hopping back from the briar-patch to go the rounds of the five little forms, where five brown bunnies waited silently in the dew-sweet April night.

"But where is Daddy Cottontail?" asked Mammy. "What has become of your father?"

Where, indeed, was Daddy Cottontail throughout the night's adventure, when—if ever—his little family needed his protection?

You may be sure he was having troubles of his own!

Before ever Mammy had spied the foxes searching out her little ones,—just as the full moon rising behind the woods had lightened the growing dusk,—Daddy had hopped forth from behind a mullein plant to nibble a supper of new clover.

Suddenly he spied a shadow flapping soundlessly across the moon.

"Whoo Lee, the Owl!" Daddy told himself, freezing as motionless as a little brown stump.

He was afraid to run to cover, for fear of attracting the attention of one whose night-seeing eyes saw every motion from even high in air, and whose great round ear could hear the faintest rustle in the grass.

Daddy well knew that the Great Barred Owl had ears that reach in a circle clear round each eye, one ear tuned to hear the louder sounds of his enemies, the other ear so fine and delicate that it could hear the sound a mouse makes scampering through the grass.

Small hope had Daddy Cottontail of escaping observation, should he move a hair's breadth from where he crouched. He might as well try to escape Fate itself, as well he knew. His mother before him had taught him that before he was weaned.

Of all the enemies that bunnies have to face, the great barred owl is the worst. From him there is no escape save under a briar-patch.

So you can imagine how scared Daddy was. He was almost afraid, as he crouched there in the grasses trying not to tremble, that the wizard Owl would hear the very thump of his heart beats.

Claws outspread for a sudden swoop.

X

THE OWL FINDS HIS QUARRY

Yes, sir! Daddy Cottontail, the little brown Hare, was having troubles of his own!

These moonlight nights are great times for hunting, as Daddy knew. He had not planned to go far afield, but no sooner had he reached the open meadow than that soft shadow flapped soundlessly across the moon. Daddy knew it was the owl,—because no other bird could fly so soundlessly.

He was too far from the briar-patch to make a sudden dash for its thorny shelter. He could never in this world out-distance those swift wings, if it came to a race across the meadow, for Whoo Lee was faster than any creature on four legs.

Then, too, the briar-patch lay in quite the wrong direction. The Owl was nearer it than Daddy now, and there seemed nothing better to do than to stay where he was, and pretend to be a stump.

But his knees were tense, ready to shoot him

like coiled springs into the race for life, should the great Owl suddenly see through his cam-ou-flage, and realise that he was not the brown stump he pre-ten-ded to be.

Daddy sighed, as he counted his chances. He had certainly had one series of adventure since the day he was born.

Ah, well, the little bunnies would soon be grown, and Mammy would be able to see them through, if anything dreadful were to happen!

Then his heart gave a throb of relief: Whoo Lee was circling back again. But no,—here he came, his great round eyes piercing every shadowed hum-mock in the meadow, in his careful search for quarry.

Faster than the wind he flew, his long feathered legs hanging ready, with claws out-spread for a sudden swoop, his beak curved like a sabre, and his eyes seeming to take up his whole face, so immense they appeared in the slanting moon-light.

Around and around he drifted, like the very ghost of an owl, the soft plumage on the giant wings making no more sound than a moon-beam. The hylas, away off in Pollywog Pond, sang to their polly-wogs with the

weird sound of fairy sleigh bells in the still night air. But Whoo Lee, for all his mammoth size, would not have raised even a whisper of his nearness with his own down-clad wings.

Then, so suddenly that Daddy's heart came clear up in his throat, and stuck there, cutting off his breath,—Whoo Lee was above him!

It had come!

A thousand thoughts flashed through Daddy's mind, as he prepared for the doom that would descend upon him. Would there, then, be no more wakings in the glow of sunrise, with Betty Blue-bird singing, and the grass a-hum with cheerful insects? No more luscious clover, no more raids on the garden at the Valley Farm, no more moonlight frolics with his fellow Cottontails? Surely life was far too wonderful to be snapped off thus, to make supper for an owl!

But—Whoo Lee was just above him! Was there a fighting chance?

XI

NEVER SAY DIE

"Never say die," said Daddy Cottontail, the little brown Hare, as he realized that Whoo Lee, the Owl, had discovered his hiding.

There didn't seem a chance in the world, for the great barred owl was swifter than a fox and fiercer than a lynx. Besides, it was too late to run away, with Whoo Lee all but upon him!

Daddy had spied the owl from the instant his great wings had crossed the path of the moon, and in those moments of waiting every possible means of escape had revolved in his feverish mind.

He had hoped against hope that his cam-ou-flage might work, and Whoo Lee take him for a still brown stump. But there was still another chance,—if such a last straw could be called a chance,—and he meant to die trying for it, if need be.

Full ten feet away stood a thorny little wild rose bush not yet in bloom. Once under

that, provided he could make it in one last leap, the Owl might or might not be able to reach him. Thorns are the one thing that owls will not take chances with.

So now as Whoo Lee swooped upon him, Daddy gave one monstrous leap, tense muscles pro-pell-ing him like an arrow shot from a bow!

A burning pain tore through his leg as he made the thorn bush, but it was the clutch of the thorns, not the Owl, and Daddy crouched in the very heart of the bush while the dis-ap-point-ed owl circled around and around him without quite daring the punishing briars.

Then away down across the farther end of the meadow there was a faint scurry, as some bunny neighbor, not hearing Whoo Lee's silent flight, sallied forth to sup on clover. There was but the pause of an instant, and the Owl had darted like a bolt of lightning at the spot where issued the tiny sound,—and then Daddy heard a despairing squeak, and his heart filled with pity, as he saw a long-eared form limply hanging from the great bird's claws. And Whoo Lee bore the neighbor bunny swiftly away.

Over meadow and corn-field, barn-yard and orchard, higher and higher and higher in the path of the moon they went. Now Whoo Lee had sailed over the tops of the deep woods that climbed Mount Olaf, drifting above the pine trees like a gray-winged ghost, till at last he paused in the top of the tallest pine.

Daddy's heart calmed down to its normal beat as he realized that he was saved. But he never would cross the meadow again without the memory of that still, limp form that Whoo Lee had carried away to his tree-top.

"There are no two ways about it," he told Mammy, as he finally joined his little family. "We must take the children somewhere else. That is twice Whoo Lee has been here, and he'll surely come again!"

"Why, Daddy," exclaimed Mammy, with a welcoming rub of her soft black nose, "that is just what I have been thinking! I certainly don't like the idea of all these new young foxes! Now they have found out where we live, the children are not safe an instant. I've got the finest plan! Let's go and take a look at that old stone wall that runs along the orchard!"

XII

THE COTTONTAILS FIND NEW QUARTERS

"No, sir," said Mammy Cottontail, as she thought of the six brown bunnies that looked to her for protection, "I certainly don't like the idea of all those new young foxes having found out where we live.

"You can just take my word for it, Daddy Cottontail, we'll never raise Wriggly Nose and Flap Ears and Paddy Paws and Fuzzy-Wuzz and Furtive Feet and Hippity Skip in an open meadow like this!

"Whoo Lee, the Owl, was bad enough, but Whoo Lee and Mother Red Fox and Frisky Fox and the whole fox family are too much to take a chance with.

"I'd rather risk living near those human creatures at the Valley Farm! Come, children, let's go and take a look at the Old Stone Wall," and she and Daddy led their six across the meadow and the corn-field,

around the sleeping barn-yard and into the old apple orchard without more ado.

Here, around three sides, stretched the old stone wall that Mammy had set her heart upon.

"See!" she pointed out to her little family, as the first pink of dawn began to flush the sky. "There is no end to the crannies and crevices we can back into, behind these tall grasses. We can see and not be seen, and nothing can ever come on us from behind. We can doze all day in perfect safety."

Daddy gave one look about the smiling orchard, with its canopy of apple blossoms, in which a chorus of birds was already tuning up; and he fairly capered with joy. Wriggly Nose and the other babies raced giddily about looking for the best places.

"But — have you forgotten Barn-yard Thomas, the black cat, and Lop Ear the Hound?" asked Daddy, coming to a sudden standstill.

"Well, we've always got to take some kind of chance," sighed Mammy, settling her brown back into a niche from which she could look down the slope at the Valley Farm.

"It must be a pretty safe place, or all these birds wouldn't be lo-cat-ing here," and she pointed out the nest-building going on everywhere about them.

"That's right," agreed Daddy, and he began his break-fast on a patch of clover with a mind at rest.

Meantime, what had become of the un-for-tu-nate hare that Whoo Lee had caught and carried off in the moon-light?

Away up in the top of the tallest pine-tree of the deep woods that climbed Mount Olaf, two of the downiest Owl babies that ever greeted the spring waited hun-gri-ly, their great spec-tac-led eyes peering sol-emn-ly over the moonlit spaces that their wings were still too weak to try.

Like all wil-der-ness babies, they kept perfectly still during their parents' absence, lest some prowler of the night should spy them out and make short work of them.

XIII

YOUNG TIMOTHY AND THOMAS

Time passed. The Old Apple Orchard turned from pink-white blossom to leaf-green, and then to the red of early apples, spicy-fragrant in the summer sunshine.

Mammy Cottontail had lived under the Old Stone Wall ever since Wriggly Nose and his brothers were tiny babies.

Those youngsters had long since learned to look out for themselves, though they still had their forms socially near. But now there was a new brown baby to bring up in the way he should go. In fact, there had been five, along about the first of August, but Writho the Black Snake had swallowed one, and Lop Ear, the Hound at the Valley Farm had caught another and Barnyard Tom another,—and one had drowned in a big rain-storm.

So Mammy Cottontail was mighty careful of wee Timothy. For he was all that was left for her to take care of.

He was a bright-eyed little fellow, as downy as a kitten, and so tiny that he might have been taken for a little brown clod of earth,—a splendid cam-ou-flage.

And it was lucky he had some means of protecting himself in the world in which he found himself, as he peered through the pink sweet-clover beneath which his mother had hidden him.

For it was a world in which he had more enemies than he could have counted on all his twenty toes. And every one of them was fond of rabbit meat.

There was Barnyard Thomas, the black Cat, to name only the nearest one, who now that he had proven himself a champion mouser by ridding the barn of rats, had taken to hunting wilder game.

The day on which Timothy had his first adventure had dawned cool and misty, and he had snuggled down under his little fur blanket,—made from his mother's breast,—and gone to sleep as soon as she had left him.

He was awakened by an uncanny feeling that some danger was approaching.

There certainly was a peculiar rustling in the tall grasses that he hadn't noticed before. Then, too, his wonderful little black nose told him that there was something there besides the sweet-clover and the apple trees and the moist brown earth.

Bunnies have keener noses than the best of human beings, and they surely need them to help keep them safe.

Timothy crouched lower on his fuzzy little legs, laying his ears back close to his round head in his effort to lay low, as his mother had cautioned him to. But the rustling grew nearer and nearer, and Timothy, peering wide-eyed through the clover, saw a huge whiskered black form creeping forward, with yellow eyes that searched this way and that.

Timothy crouched still further into the clover,—which was against all his mother's teachings, as she had bade him over and over again, when frightened, to make no move at all, but to lie like a clod.

Perhaps Thomas would have found him anyway,—for it was the barn-yard cat.—Thomas had a nose as keen as Timothy's, and he could smell a rabbit as easily as a mouse.



"A black shadow with cruel black eyes was creeping."

The next thing the little brown bunny knew, that sleek black form had launched itself at him with a bound, and he just managed to dodge the curved claws that grasped at him.

"Help! Help!" he shrilled, with all his might. "Mammy! Mammy! Help!"

And Mammy heard, though it took one of her prize jumps to reach the scene in time.

"Gr-r-r-r! What can a rabbit like you do to ME?" growled Thomas, making another pounce for Timothy.



XIV

A GOOD FIGHT

What, indeed, could a little brown Hare like Mammy Cottontail do to save her baby from Barnyard Thomas?

For the cat was twice her size, and armed with both teeth and claws, besides which hers were no com-par-i-son.

Yet there was wee Timothy, almost within the tom-cat's clutches. And now the cat HAD pounced upon him, holding him between his paws, teeth bared to end the matter.

To a wild mother, nothing is impossible. She had her heels,—those long hind feet with which she made the mammoth leaps that carried a rabbit out of danger's way. And she was ready to give her own life to save Timothy's.

Straight at Thomas's head she leapt. And thwack! came those long hind feet of hers straight across his sen-sit-ive nose!

Thomas blinked and spat. But again she

leapt, this time giving him a blinding blow across the eyes.

The old cat caught his breath with surprise, and struck at her with his claws. But she came a third time. Bing! She landed a heavy blow across his nose again. And this she repeated again and again, hopping about the intruder so swiftly and so un-ex-pect-ed-ly that he was half blinded, and his nose quite battered.

At last Thomas had had enough, and he dropped the baby bunny in order to punish the mother. But she had been expecting this, and leapt away from him in time. She didn't leap too fast for him to follow, though, for she wanted to lead him clear away from Timothy.

As for that wee ball of down, once Thomas's back was turned, he crept into a crevice of the old stone wall behind a clump of grasses.

Of course, Mammy easily out-dis-tanced Thomas, once she saw that her baby was safe. In fact, she gave him something to remember by leading him straight to a briar-patch in the edge of the woods, where that

sleek rascal tore his fur before he realized that he was needed back at the barn.

The next thing Timothy knew, Mammy was signalling with a thump of her long hind foot for him to follow where her little white bunch of tail showed the way,—and raising his own tiny flag behind him, he hopped after her as fast as he could make it, till they were in the deep woods, where Thomas never ventured.

The apple orchard, with its Old Stone Wall, had been in some respects an ideal home, for the crevices in the wall had given Mammy a chance to lie safely hidden on all sides but one, while she kept an outlook over the tops of the grasses. But where Thomas had been once, he would come again! And that would never do. Besides, there was Lop Ear the Hound, who might come to look the orchard over again any day.

On the other hand, the woods were full of enemies of every kind, from bears to foxes.

XV

IN THE CABBAGE PATCH

The woods were even better than the orchard, declared Timothy, Mammy Cottontail's littlest bunny, as he followed her snow-white tail.

The sky had cleared, and everything about them was a chorus of color and perfume.

Just a little inside the edge of the forest, the people from the Valley Farm had made a clearing. Here the meadow stretched up one side of a gentle hill and down the other.

At the very top of this rise of ground Mammy stopped and looked about her. On four sides of the plowed field stretched a border of woodland, while along the side toward Mount Olaf the stones had all been piled in a rough stone wall over which wild blackberries sent their thorny arms.

That meant that Mammy could see any one approaching a long way off, while if worst came to worst, she and Timothy could easily

scuttle to some crevice in the stones, behind a thorny vine.

She was almost tempted to take up her quarters in some crevice in the wall itself, but that it made her think of the Old Orchard Wall where Timothy had so nearly met his end.

Straight down the middle of the field ran rows of winter cabbages, while potatoes flanked the sides. Under the spreading leaves of a mammoth cabbage she and Timothy decided they would be quite safe,—except, of course, when the Hired Man from the Valley Farm came around to weed. But he was no one to be afraid of,—one could always hear him half a mile away.

"Well, little son, how do you like our new home?" Mammy asked, noting Timothy's wide-eyed wonder.

"Great!" said Timothy, standing up on his little hind legs and gazing first at the plowed furrows with their luscious cabbages, and the sweet clovers growing like weeds between the rows, then at the green border of the forest, and finally at the blue sky with its cooling wind clouds arching over all.

On a clover almost within reach, a yellow

and black butterfly danced contentedly. In a choke-cherry tree that reached half over the stone wall, a pair of catbirds were holding a conversation; while from a tangle of wild grapevine that climbed over the reddening sumac further on, a yellow warbler sang to his mate. And a fat yellow-vested bumble-bee, who was exploring the velvet spikes of the sumac, added his deep bass to the chorus.

But there is seldom found an Eden without its serpent. It was so in this case. And it was well for Mammy Cottontail that she hadn't decided on the old stone wall for her head-quarters. For it was already tenanted by someone who cared nothing for the out-look,—some one long and slim and shiny black,—whose skin felt cold and slimy.

It was Writho the Black Snake!

XVI

A COUNCIL OF WAR

"Oh, deary me, whatever shall I do?" sighed Mammy Cottontail, the little brown Hare, as she spied Writho the Black Snake asleep on the old stone wall.

She must have spoken aloud, in her dismay, though she had supposed herself quite alone.

"Hello, there! What's the trouble now?" asked a hoarse voice from the pine tree under which she had made the discovery.

It was Jimmy, the great black Crow, who had been watching with a dozen of his followers.

"My, how you startled me!" exclaimed Mammy Cottontail, peering up into the dark branches. "Is that you, Jim Crow?"

"At your service, Ma'am! Entirely at your service!" the hoarse voice replied. "What can I do for you?"

"Oh, Jimmy," wailed Mammy Cottontail, "just look at Writho over there asleep! How ever in this world can I bring Timothy up in a

field that Writho uses for his hunting ground?

"I've just been driven from one good home,—in the old apple orchard. And if it wasn't for Writho this place would be ideal!"

"Where are you located?" asked Jimmy, sympathetically.

"Right up there on the top of that little hill, under a cabbage leaf," sighed Mammy. "We can see an enemy approaching from a long way off,—that is, anyone that comes on four legs. And if necessary we can run straight down the row under the cabbage leaves till we get to the old stone wall. Once there, we can creep into some crevice behind a blackberry vine,—for Father Red Fox himself wouldn't risk his fur in the brambles."

"Well, then, I don't see but what we'll just simply have to get rid of Writho," said Jimmy, folding his black wings as if the matter were settled.

"We'll have to get rid of Writho," chorused the twelve black crows, to whom Jimmy's word was law.

"But how?" wailed Mammy Cottontail. "I could beat him off with my heels if he caught my Timothy, the way I did Thomas,

the black cat, but I couldn't kill him, and he'd only wait for another chance.

"It is a case for using one's wits," said Jimmy. "Let me think! I have it! Look here, Sister Cottontail, you just wait here till we come back!" and off he flew with the twelve behind him, so fast that Mammy could only stare after them in amazement.

"What is it, Mammy?" piped Timothy, hopping down between the cabbages to his mother's side.

"You, child, go right back home this instant! Didn't Mammy tell you to stay in bed until she came?" exclaimed Mammy in alarm. "Quick, now, before Writho wakes up and sees you," and she leapt at the little fellow with a blow of her long hind feet that ef-fec-tu-al-ly boxed his ears.

"You must learn to obey! It is life and death if you don't!" she added, as the little brown ball of fuzz went hip-pity-skip back through the cabbages.

There was a rustle of wings overhead, as Jimmy and his flock came back. But this time they said never a word, for in each of their beaks they carried a queer little twig.

XVII

POISON!--BEWARE!

"What have you there?" asked Mammy Cottontail, as the crows alighted in front of her, each with an odd little twig in his bill, and his eyes half closed.

"Poison!—Beware!" announced Jimmy Crow, dropping his twig on the ground before him, and immediately backing off from it with tears in his eyes. And "Poison!" announced his comrades, dropping theirs in the same way.

"It is a case for using one's wits," Jimmy declared. (For Mammy Cottontail had appealed to him about Writho, the Black Snake.)

"We're going to make this cabbage patch perfectly safe for your baby," continued Jimmy, comfortingly, with a glance to the hill-top where wee Timothy lay hidden under a leaf.

"How? Will these poison Writho?" asked Mammy, wide-eyed. "Is *that* the way you

thought of making the cabbage patch safe for my baby?"

"Well, not exactly," smiled Jimmy, with a wise look. "You see, he wouldn't actually eat it!—That's the only way it would kill him."

"I'm so glad!" gasped Mammy. For she couldn't bear to hurt even an enemy unless she had to.

"But the old snake can't hop over these weeds, and he can't fly over, and he can't wriggle past without thrusting his face straight into them."

"What would that do?" asked Mammy, her eyes fairly popping out of her head. "Would they sting him?"

"Would they sting him?" mocked Jimmy. "These things would put his eyes out, if he thrust his nose into them. I'll bet if he had to take his choice between going hungry and crawling through these after Timothy, he'd go hungry every time!"

"Now, fellows, let's drop them in a circle around that big cabbage up there,—but not too close,—and then Mammy and Timothy can jump over them, but Writho can't crawl through."

"How did you ever think of it?" asked Mammy Cottontail. "You are the cleverest bird I know!"

"Oh, I'm a wise old crow," said Jimmy, throwing his chest out. "Just call on me, any time you are in trouble:—As for this poison, it's generally been kept a secret, except among us bird-folk.

"And then it wouldn't do any one else the slightest bit of good, because no one knows where to find these plants,—but look out and hop clear of the stuff, or you'll be sorry!"

And once more taking his twig in his beak, he led the twelve black crows to the hill-top, where they laid their poison circle around the cabbages.

"Now just don't let Timothy get caught outside that circle!" he cautioned Mammy Cottontail, before leading his followers back to the pine tree, "and you've nothing to fear from Writho."

"Indeed, I'll see that he never goes anywhere alone!" declared Mammy solemnly "Not till he knows more about the woods."

"That's my advice!" shouted Jimmy over his shoulder.

XVIII

THROUGH THE BARBED WIRE

Now Mammy Cottontail had never been far into the woods. She did not know that just where the Old Logging Road turned toward Silver Creek lay Pollywog Pond. And behind the pond was a swamp filled with skunk cabbages and Jack-in-the-pulpits, and tall ferns.

And in the very heart of the swamp was a quick-sand—a wet, sticky place where one's feet would sink in deeper and deeper, until one went clear under, head and all, and never came up again.

There are very few places of that sort, at least in this kind of country, thank goodness! But those few are mighty dangerous. For one might as well drown as get drawn into a quick-sand. In fact, it wouldn't be half so unpleasant.

Because it was so dangerous for everyone, man and beast alike, the people at the Valley

Farm had run a barbed wire fence around this quick-sand,—though the wild roses had grown up so thick around it that one could scarcely tell it was there until one came up plump! against the thorny wires.

Then one day Mammy found the hound on her trail. And she would have lost her head entirely and run right around in a circle, and Lop Ear would have caught her, but that Jimmy Crow kept just above the tree-tops advising her of the best way to go.

"Bow-ow-ow-ow!" screamed Lop Ear almost at her heels.

"Straight ahead! Straight ahead!" shrilled Jimmy and the twelve black crows, "Straight ahead!"

And Mammy kept straight ahead, though it took her down the Old Logging Road, past Pollywog Pond, and on into the swamp.

"Now!" yelled Jimmy, as they neared the quick-sand. "Straight through the fence,—but stop the minute you get on the other side."

And because Mammy trusted so fully to Jimmy's wisdom, she nerved herself for the effort. Indeed, what else was there to do?

She had often led Lop Ear into the Briar Patch, but she had never dared this before, although just inside the fence was a narrow rim of solid ground before the quick-sand began.

It was a desperate chance to take, for if she were to lose her footing on the other side, and get stuck in the mire, it would be all up with her. Besides, what if she should get her fur caught on the barbs?

"Yow-ow-ow!" yelled Lop Ear, coming on pell-mell.

"Could she make it"? she asked herself. She must dart between the close-set wires, full speed,—then stop short.

The next instant she had leapt straight as an arrow through the wild rose bushes, wires and all!



XIX

JIMMY FOOLS THE HOUND

No sooner had Mammy Cottontail assured herself that she had escaped the Hound than a new terror chilled her blood.

"The Bear! The Bear! Look out for the Bear!" Jimmy Crow began calling to her from his cedar tree.

As if it wasn't quite bad enough to be hiding so close to a quick-sand that would suck one straight down into the mud and never let go, if she moved an inch!

Then her frightened eyes beheld Lop Ear making off as fast as he could go, with his tail between his legs, while Jimmy laughed as if his sides would split.

"That's once I fooled that dog," he cawed at last. "Now *he's* out of your way!"

"What's this?" asked Mammy. "Do you mean there isn't any bear, after all?"

"That's what!" chuckled Jimmy. "Oh, I'm a wise old crow!"

"You are that," said Mammy gratefully. "Now do you suppose it will be safe for me to go home to Timothy?"

"I don't see why not," said Jimmy "Though I'll follow Lop Ear and make sure he doesn't turn back!" And he was off, with his black flock after him.

Mammy was just creeping timidly back through the barbed wire fence when her little black nose began to wriggle at a scent that was new to her. What's more, it was one that spelled danger.

At first she couldn't tell just where it came from. But she pointed her long ears first this way, then that, and in another instant she had caught just the faintest kind of rustle. It seemed to come from somewhere in the tree-tops, and it seemed very nearly over-head. And some instinct sent a thrill of fear down Mammy's spine.

Though Mammy did not see it, a furry black form was creeping, creeping, creeping—oh, so stealthily—around the trunk of a cedar tree that Mammy would have to pass. On and on it came, silently through the tree-tops, till it crouched just over-head.

And Mammy listened, trembling, straining her ears for the movements that she felt rather than heard, while she wiggled her nose this way and that, trying to decide whose scent it was that the breeze kept bringing her.

What could it be, Mammy asked her quaking heart. Someone after a rabbit, of course!—poor Timothy would wait in vain!—and a young bunny doesn't last long, once he's lost his mother.

If only she could have seen this stealthy creature that seemed to be stalking her, she'd have some idea of which way to run. As it was, all she could think of was to crouch just inside the fence on the edge of the quick-sand, and wait!

How fine the green world looked to her this morning, as she wondered if she would ever see it again! How beautiful the song Myrtle Warbler was singing somewhere not far away! And how many glorious races she had run, in her desire to live on in that same green world!

Then Mammy's nerves gave way, and she screamed, as she suddenly caught sight of the green eyes on the limb above!

XX

IN THE QUICKSANDS

"The game is up!" thought Mammy Cottontail as she saw the cruel eyes above her.

For flattened out along the top of an overhanging limb was a creature that looked for all the world like a sleek black cat, except that he had a bushy tail like a squirrel, and a rather different look to his face.

It was a marten,—a pine marten,—one of the cruelest rabbit-hunters in all the Deep Woods!

Already his plump, furry legs were drawn up under him ready for the spring that would land him on Mammy's back. And now his eyes gleamed red with the murder that was in his heart, and his sharp claws scraped along the bark.

What good did it do, Mammy asked herself, to be inside a barbed wire fence, when some one was going to spring on her from above?

The case seemed hopeless. Yet all in an instant, Mammy did a lot of reasoning, as people sometimes do when in deadly peril. Their wits are sharpened as at no other time in their lives,—as, indeed, they need to be.

Should she leap backward or forward, or should she crouch there paralyzed with fright and let herself be caught without a struggle? Certainly not the latter! She could die game, at least!

Just because it would have taken the fraction of an instant longer to leap back through the fence, Mammy chose the other direction. And at the very moment that the marten sprang from the limb of the over-hanging cedar, Mammy leapt straight out over the quick-sand.

If she had to die anyway, she felt, she'd rather sink into the quick-sand than be torn by the marten's claws.

It was one chance in a million! But Mammy's long hind legs had steel springs in them, and her mammoth bound carried her clear across the bog to the rim of solid earth beyond.

With her heart in her throat and her legs trembling under her, Mammy turned to see what had become of her foe.

To her amazement, the black, silky form of the marten, after lighting on the patch of ground she had left, made a leap straight after her,—but a leap that didn't quite reach.

For though martens are swifter than rabbits on their legs, and can drop straight down from the highest branches onto their prey, they haven't the same kind of springs in their heels that bunnies have.—It was all that saved her from the cruel jaws that would have torn her to bits. For the marten landed squarely in the quick-sand!

The next minute it was all over. Lower and lower he sank, though he struck out fiercely with his fore-paws in search of something to save him. Mammy stood motionless in the horror of the moment. For now that she herself was saved, she could not bear to think of even her foe being drowned in mud.

When there was nothing left on the surface of the pool save a bubble to show where the furry black form had landed, Mammy slipped



"Lower and lower he sank."

through the fence and into a rabbit trail, and hip-pity-skip she made for home.

Straight over the Old Stone Wall she leapt, without a thought of Writho, the Black Snake, who lay there sunning his coils,—and on to the top-most cabbage of the garden in the clearing.

But her joy was short-lived.—Wee Timothy was gone!



XXI

WHERE WAS TIMOTHY?

Where, indeed, was Timothy, the wee brown bunny?

Mammy Cottontail was frantic!

First she stared at Writho the Black Snake, sunning himself on the Old Stone Wall. But there was no swelling anywhere along his shining length, so Timothy could not be inside of Writho, for he swallows everything whole.

But what could have happened while she was having her own adventure? Timothy never disobeyed, and he had promised her never to leave the cabbage patch without her. Something, then, must have found him out in his hiding. But what? Could Red-tail the Hawk have seen his little brown form nibbling at the pink sweet clover? Or could Mother Red Fox have come sniffing along between the rows and found him?

It made Mammy's heart ache just to think of all the things that might have happened to

a baby bunny while she had been escaping Lop Ear.

Racing frantically around and around the clearing, and through the woods on either side, Mammy's nose suddenly told her something that sent a chill through her blood.—She had crossed Lop Ear's trail!

So he had cut across that way, instead of following the old Logging Road back to the Valley Farm!—Probably by chance, but a sorry chance for wee Timothy!

This, then, was what had happened, she told herself: Lop Ear had passed so near that Timothy had taken fright and run for his life,—with what result Mammy did not dare to think.

With her nose to the ground, she began following the trail. She must know the worst!

First, it wound through a briar-patch at the edge of the clearing.—Good for Timothy!—Next it led zig-zag through the woods past a great tip-tilted log, and on to the old Logging Road. There it turned and came back as far as the foot of the log, then it zig-zagged around and around, as if the hound had not

known which way to turn,—and finally led off toward the Valley Farm.

The thing puzzled Mammy, especially as she only got Timothy's scent at the very first. Hopping along with her nose to the ground, she traced it as far as the tip-tilted log, then lost it entirely. It was most mysterious.

"Oh, dear, what shall I do?" said Mammy, circling around the point where she had lost his trail. "That bunny never touched earth from this point on. And how he could have disappeared, unless into Lop Ear's jaws, is more than I can see!"

"Haw, haw, haw," shrilled a familiar voice in a pine tree over-head. And "Haw, haw, haw," screamed Jimmy Crow's black flock. "I thought you had a better nose than that, Mammy Cottontail!"

"This is no time for making fun of people," wept Mammy. "I can't find Timothy."

"I can't see that you are much more clever than Lop Ear was," chuckled Jimmy Crow.

"What is that right above your head?"

XXII

JIMMY TALKS CROWS' RIGHTS

There on the very top of the tip-tilted log sat Timothy, the wee brown bunny, his fuzzy chest heaving with fright.

He looked exactly like a bump on a log, and to make his cam-ou-flage more complete, he had actually closed his eyes, and so did not even see his Mammy.

"Haw, haw, haw!" shrilled Jimmy Crow from the pine-tree above. "Pretty clever for a youngster, now, wasn't it?—hid so his own Mammy couldn't find him!"

"How did you do it?" gasped Mammy Cottontail, leaping to his side and licking him all over to make sure he was un-hurt.

"That was easy," said Timothy, suddenly relaxing from his fright and throwing his baby chest out proudly.

"I just gave one big leap on to the log, and the hound ran by with his nose to the ground, and he never once thought to look any higher.

All I had to do was to sit still and wait till he was gone."

"Hounds are stupid," said Jimmy Crow. "They won't believe anything but their noses. But now, unless I can be of further service here, I am going back to the corn-field to have a little feed.

"Come on, fellows! Mammy has been scouting for us, and she has found that fellow is only a scare-crow, so we've nothing to fear. And I declare, my sides do feel hollow!"

"You see, Mammy, the Farmer has always been most unfair to us crows. He has tried every way to kill us, just because of the few ears of corn we eat each season. He never stops to figure out that if it wasn't for us he wouldn't have any corn at all."

"Why, how is that?" asked Mammy, signalling Timothy as they followed hippity-skip to the corn-field.

"Because," said Jimmy, flying just overhead. "Don't you see? We crows catch dozens and hundreds and thousands of bugs and worms and field mice and other things that destroy the corn.

"Why, that field of corn would have been pulled up by the roots before ever it was six inches high, if it hadn't been for us crows!

"And yet they begrudge us the few ears we eat when it's ripe! You wouldn't think the Farmer could treat us so, if you didn't actually see him trying to shoot us!

"Such ingratitude I never did see!"

"Oh, I'm awfully sorry, Jimmy," said Mammy Cottontail. "Of course he doesn't understand!"

Arrived at the edge of the corn-field, where the scare-crow flapped his arms in the wind, Jimmy directed his followers: "Now you fellows wait right here! I'll go scouting around and see if any one's about!"

"I'm going to watch," said Mammy Cottontail, "and see what luck you have!" And she and Timothy fell to nibbling some clovers at the edge of the field.

Jimmy circled higher and higher, till he could get a bird's-eye view of all the surrounding acres.

"Every one's down in the lower pasture stacking hay," he finally reported. And the

twelve black crows sailed into the corn-field in high glee.

"What's that?" suddenly asked Jimmy, sighting a glittering object on the wagon road.



XXIII

JIMMY'S FIND

"Kuk, kuk, kuk!" warned the twelve black crows, as Jimmy, their leader, circled down to the Old Logging Road.

"Look out or some one will shoot!"

"No they won't," said Jimmy. "They're all down in the lower pasture pitching hay. Even the Little Girl!"

And he alighted beside some shining object (Mammy Cottontail could see it from her clover patch.) It was a round, yellow band, with a glittering red stone set in the side of it.

Jimmy picked it up in his beak and flew away to admire it.

He had a hiding place for such treasures. Indeed, a certain hole in the top of the pine-tree down at the edge of the clearing furnished him much en-ter-tain-ment when the weather was bad.

"What is it, what is it, what is it?" shrilled Jimmy's flock, as their leader circled away with the shining object, quite forgetting the corn.

But Jimmy could not reply, for to have done so, he would have had to open his beak and drop his find.

"Isn't that just like a crow,—for all that I value his friendship?" laughed Mammy, with a wag of her ear.

"Perhaps he wasn't really hungry after all," suggested Timothy, the wee brown bunny, with a blink.

"Probably not," agreed Mammy. "It's certainly easy enough for a crow to get his living. There is almost nothing he need be afraid of,—lucky fellow."

"That's why he can warn other people, isn't it, Mammy?" asked Timothy.

"Hush!" said Mammy, as she caught the sound of voices approaching from the hay-field.

It was the Little Girl from the Valley Farm and her father.

"That's mighty funny," the man was saying, as he knelt to examine the dust. "Here is where you dropped it, as sure as shooting," —as he found the imprint of a ring in the dust. "And here are the tracks of a crow. As I live, I believe that black rascal stole it! What-

ever made you take your ring off, anyway?"

"I don't know," wept the Little Girl, "but I did."

"Well, don't cry. I'll bet those crows have it, and I'll bet I know where they nest."

"Oh, do you suppose they've got it?" the child brightened.

"Well, look at those tracks. You just wait till I get my gun, and we'll follow those fellows and see what we see."

"Oh, but you wouldn't shoot them?" cried the child. "Don't, please don't do that!"

"What? When they'll only rob my corn-fields if I let them go?"

"But you have so much!" she pleaded,— "Don't kill them!—I'll go without some of my corn to make up for what they take. They make the woods so jolly and nice!"

"Well, I'll make no promises," said the farmer, undecided.

"Mammy!" asked Timothy, wide-eyed. "Is it Jimmy he wants to kill?"

XXIV

JIMMY IS FORGIVEN

People will pay almost any price for the sake of being amused.

And that was as true of the Valley Farmer as of anyone else.

At any rate, he decided to forget the gun. For no sooner had Jimmy hid his glittering new plaything in the knot-hole in the pine-tree, than he came circling back to have a little fun with Barn-yard Tom, the Cat.

Jimmy had often teased the hens by snatching their food, when the men were away in the fields,—for Jimmy knew that men used guns.

And today he was feeling especially cocky, what with having saved Mammy Cottontail, and found the ring, and learned the secret of the scare-crow.

As it happened, he brought three of his flock. Now Tom was stretched along the edge of the wood-shed roof taking a nap when he was awakened by the sound of a feeble squawk, and opening one eye lazily he beheld

a crow seemingly with a broken wing, struggling to get out of his reach.

Tom promptly gathered his feet beneath him and began creeping forward, his mouth watering for a taste of crow meat.

But just as he was ready to make the leap that would have landed him on Jimmy's back, another crow flew down from behind and nipped the cat on the tail.

"Pff-f-f-f!" said Tom in surprise, turning on the second crow.

This fellow, too, had a broken wing, it seemed; and Tom stalked him clear across the wood-shed roof.

But again, as he was ready for a slap of his barbed paw, Jimmy crept up behind, and gave him a nip on the tail.

Again Tom whirled, and this time chased both lame-winged birds together. But as he was all but upon them, he got a third piercing nip in the tail.

Tom whirled like a pin-wheel, spitting wrath and injured dignity. But even as he faced about, he received a fourth peck from the rear.

Fairly beside himself in his surprise, he

leapt into the air after Jimmy, whose wing had by now recovered. But a second black form flew between them, so that he just missed his aim. And in a moment more he saw all four circling away above his head, cawing their de-ris-ion.

"Pretty good," laughed the Valley Farmer, who all this time had been hiding behind a hay-stack with his gun. "Those fellows deserve to go free."

"Yes, Jimmy is a clever Crow," Mammy Cottontail told Timothy, as the two brown bunnies watched from the tall sweet clover along the edge of the pasture road. "No one is safe from his pranks. But he's a good old scout to have around, all the same. Many's the friendly warning he'll slip you, with all his mischief.

"But sometimes I'm afraid he'll get himself into trouble that he can't get out of."

How true that was Mammy little realized.

XXV

JIMMY GETS INTO TROUBLE

Once Jimmy knew it was only a scare-crow that stood guard in the corn-field, he was in for having another feast while the men-folk were down stacking hay.

He accordingly called his flock together, and with merry shouts the whole black band of them settled down again among the silky ears.

But one thing they did not know. If the Farmer had decided not to harm them, the Hired Man had not. Without saying one word to anyone, that individual had laid a snare along the top of the snake fence.

For a time there was much feasting, Jimmy lighted on the head of the scare-crow, and plucked at the coals that made his eyes. And then he found a shiny nail, and flew around and around the field with it, with the whole flock trying to catch him.

Tiring of that diversion, he caught up a string, one end of which he saw trailing over

the fence, and tried to fly away with it. But the string was curiously hard to get loose, so Jimmy lighted on the top rail and started plucking at the loops.

The next thing Jimmy knew, the string had wrapped itself about one leg, and Jimmy,—fly as he would,—could not pull free.

My, what a scolding he set up! How he pecked at the knots that held him, storming and tossing and whirling about till the flock thought he had suddenly gone insane.

But Jimmy was not one to give up meekly. Cawing and flapping his wings like a wind-mill, he leaped again and again into the air, flying as far as his tether would let him. But each time the string brought him back with a jerk, and each time it caught more tightly around his ankle, till it hurt dreadfully.

Suddenly a cry of warning went up from his followers, who were circling helplessly around and around him. For sneaking across the barn-yard and through the nodding clover, and so along the fence, came Tom, the Black Cat whom Jimmy had teased so mercilessly only the day before.

But Tom only crouched the closer to the

fence-rail, his wicked eyes gleaming narrowly as he sharpened his claws on the bark.

"Peck his eyes out, peck his eyes out!" Jimmy shouted to his flock. But though several of them swooped low and made fierce dives at the approaching animal, none dared brave the sweeps of the barbed paw, which tore out feathers that could ill be spared.

"All right, I'll peck them out myself," yelled Jimmy, making a great deal of noise by way of keeping his courage up. For something told him he was helpless and would fare but badly with his old-time enemy.

The next instant the cat leapt, and Jimmy barely escaped, flopping just out of reach at the end of the cord that bound him to the fence.

"You *will* tweak my tail, will you?" hissed the Cat, leaping after him.—He got a mouthful of black feathers and lost a beakful of fur.

"Help, Quick!" shrilled Jimmy, staring frantically about the empty corn-field.

XXVI

INTRODUCING FATTY CHUCK

No sooner had Jimmy Crow given his call for help, with one foot in the snare and Barnyard Tom biting feathers at every leap, than a strange thing happened.

Directly underneath the fence to which Jimmy's leg was tied, in a snug little underground cavern, dwelt a fat gray fellow that looked for all the world like a great guinea-pig, except for his tail.

Fatty Wood-chuck his friends called him, though certain others, whom he had worsted in fair fight, had named him the Grouch.

As an actual fact, he was pretty fat. But as for being a grouch, no one had any complaint on that score, if they left him to mind his own affairs. It was very, very seldom he paid the slightest attention to anyone, save when someone trespassed on his own particular clover patch.

Just now Fatty's grievance was that Tom and the crows between them were making

such a nerve-snapping noise directly overhead that he could not enjoy his nap.

For a while he watched askance, with his nose just out of his hole. Then, curiously, he took a nibble at the cord, one end of which hung down directly in front of him. Having received much handling, the snare had a pleasantly salty taste that quite appealed to Fatty, and he nibbled farther.

Ah, here was a knotted place that tasted saltier than ever! Fatty eyed Tom warily, but the cat seemed fully occupied as it was, so he crept out and squared himself for a treat.

As his sharp little teeth gnawed through the knot, Jimmy Crow suddenly found that he could fly higher than the string had before allowed him. In fact, he kept on flying, though with the string still tight about his leg. And, just in the nick of time, he soared away clear out of Tom's reach, to that animal's amazement.

Fatty gazed after Jimmy indifferently,—while Tom whirled about on the wood-chuck. An old en-mi-ty existed between them, by reason of Fatty's fondness for feeding with the hens, and Tom's stern in-ter-fer-ence

every time he entered the chicken-yard. Indeed, there was a bite on the nose that Tom had never forgiven, though he had been peeking down into Fatty's hole at the time.

His rage now knew no bounds.

But Fatty also had a score to settle.

Raising himself on his haunches, with his hand-like black paws over his chest, he squeaked furiously in his fat little voice, away down deep in his throat.

But Tom was not one bit alarmed. In fact, he took Fatty for some new kind of rat and made a leap for him.

This angered Fatty beyond measure. It was one thing to be chased out of the hen-yard where he knew he did not belong, and quite another to be attacked on his own front porch, as it were. Standing up to meet him, the Chuck gave one snap of his jaws, and Tom was holding his paw up very, very tenderly.

XXVII

WHEN A WOOD-CHUCK WOULD

Now Fatty Wood-chuck was a stubborn fellow.

Once he had really made up his mind to a thing, he would do what he had set out to do, or die in the attempt.

In this case he had set out to remain in his own front yard, let come who would.—It was Barn-yard Tom, the cat, who was trespassing.

As he thought what a peaceful breakfast Tom had interrupted, Fatty would have longed to bite him, had the cat been twice his size.

As it was, Thomas got two sore paws and a nip on the sensitive tip of his nose, before he decided that there were more important things to attend to back in the big red barn.

But Fatty's temper—never of the best—had by now been thoroughly roused. Having as he supposed, routed the whole flock of

crows, to say nothing of an animal twice his size, he now decided to pursue his advantage and loot the enemy's territory.

Always before Tom had protested, (rather effectively,) when Fatty had ventured to pay the hens a call at feeding time. Now the old Chuck reasoned that the cat had had about enough for one day, and it was therefore safe to venture inside the fas-ci-nat-ing place where every night the Little Girl threw a panful of apple peels and carrot scrapings and other tid-bits to the chickens.

Life to a woodchuck is divided, for the most part, between just two pleasures,—eating one's fill of clover and grasses, and such delicacies from the vegetable garden as fall to his lot, and sleeping all curled up in a ball, deep down in the safety of his hole, till it is time to eat some more.

The barn-yard, with its fragrance of clover and carrots and corn, was a sort of paradise to Fatty. In his wildest dreams he had never been able to think of any place he'd rather be,—provided he were left in peace to enjoy the del-i-ca-cies provided for its ten-ants.

The hound, he knew, had gone away with the men to the hay-field, and the women of the Valley Farm had never tried to harm him. Beyond that, Tom had been the only drawback—and now *he* was routed. It seemed too good to be true!

Fatty Wood-chuck made one dash after the cat, who spat and yowled as he retreated to the hay-loft,—then fell to. And for upward of an hour there was no sound to disturb the stillness of a hot forenoon save the sleepy ka-ka-ka-a-a of the hens and the steady gnawing of the wood-chuck's greedy jaws.

Just as Fatty was beginning to enjoy the drowsiness that comes after a hearty meal, he was startled broad awake by the sight of Jimmy Crow flopping down squarely in front of him.

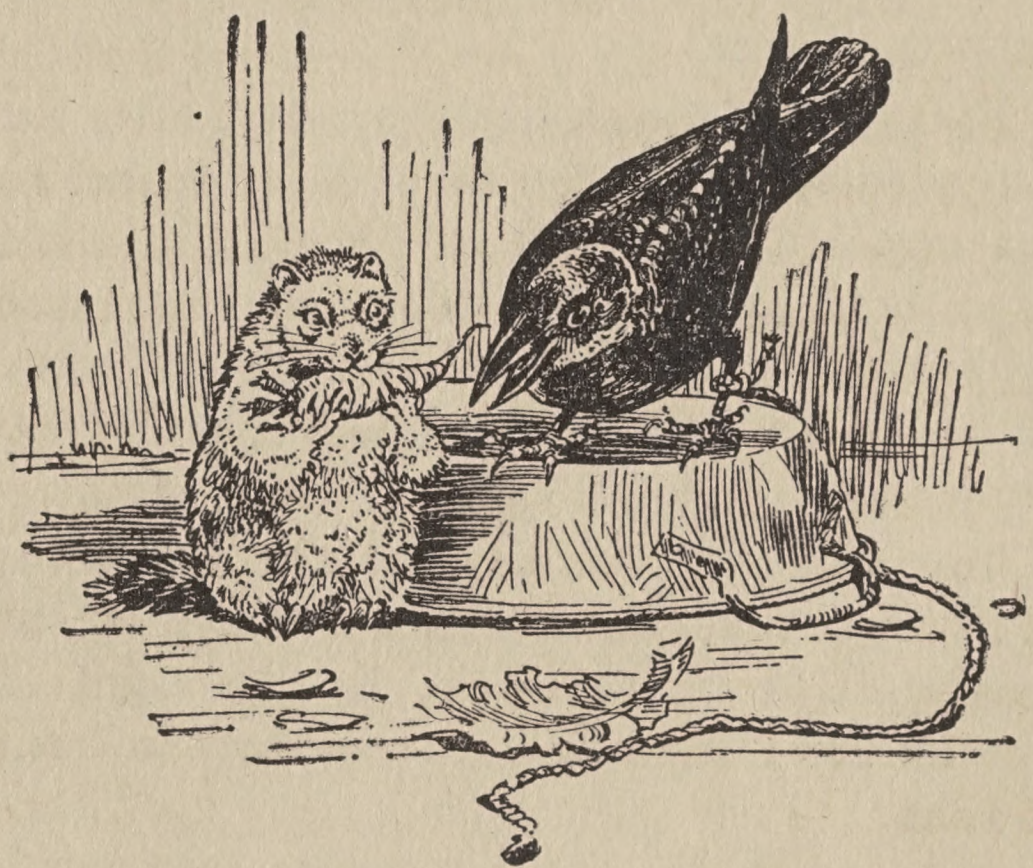
Jimmy still wore the long cord of the noose around one ankle, though the knot had been pecked half in shreds.

"Hello, there, Fatty Chuck," said Jimmy cautiously, with one eye out for the cat.

"How-do," mumbled Fatty, between nibbles at a turnip paring.

"You've done me one good turn," said Jimmy, "Want to do me another?"

"I don't mind," choked Fatty, gobbling down the last of the turnip, so that he wouldn't have to offer any to Jimmy.



XXVIII

JIM CROW HAS A PLAN

"It's this way," said Jimmy Crow, stretching his black wings lazily, as he saw that the barn-yard was empty.

"What way?" asked Fatty a bit impatiently. He was dreadfully sleepy after his feast, and he longed for the coolness of his burrow under the fence.

"You've done me one big favor, Fatty Chuck, and I shan't forget it. Any time you want to go exploring in the Farmer's garden, I'll keep a look-out, and warn you if anyone comes."

"Hurray!" said Fatty, suddenly very wide awake. "I never knew before how good these vegetables taste. That black cat has always made such a fuss every time I ventured inside the fence; though why he should is more than I can tell you. I've never seen *him* eating turnip parings."

"Yes, sir, I'll be mighty glad to keep a lookout for you, any time you say the word,"

repeated Jimmy. "Now, my idea is this.—You've done me one good turn already in cutting the knot that held me in that snare. But here I've had to carry this great cord around all day on my ankle, and you simply can't imagine what a nuisance it is."

"First, I got it caught in a pine tree, and I thought for awhile there I'd never get free. Then the fellows tried to peck it off for me, but they pecked off more skin than cord, from the way it feels. And you simply can't imagine how hard it is to fly with a thing like that on your leg."

"I can't imagine how it would feel to fly anyway," said Fatty gravely. He was always as serious as could be.

"Well, it's destroyed my ballast," said Jimmy.—"It's like having more weight on one side of a boat than the other."

"A boat!" said Fatty quarrelsomely. "I should think you were more like an air-ship, if you were to ask me."

"I said a boat," insisted Jimmy. "If you have ever seen a boat, you have noticed that it is modelled on just the lines of my figure, except that the oars aren't as broad as they



"And Fatty fell to it at Jimmy's ankle."

should be. If the oars were as broad as my wings, a boat could fly as fast as a bird."

"Boats don't fly," retorted Fatty crossly. He was always very exact in his own statements, and he did not care for Jimmy's airy flights of fancy.

"Well, well, let's not quarrel about it," said Jimmy soothingly. "What I was trying to say, when you interrupted—."

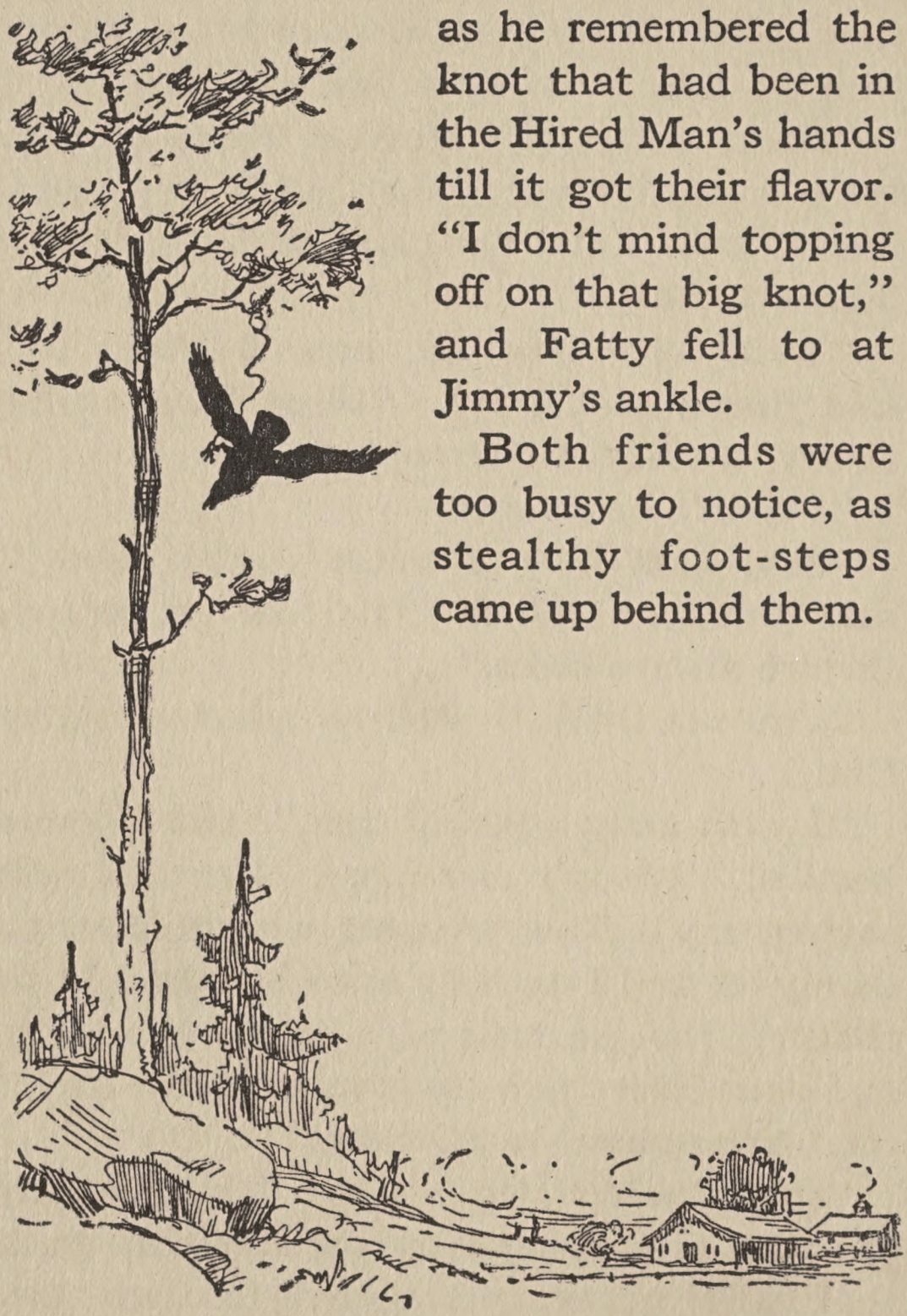
"I didn't interrupt!"

"Say, look here, I guess you're sleepy," said Jimmy. "When little folk get sleepy, they're always cross."

"I'm not little," stoutly asserted Fatty Chuck.

"I was only making fun," said Jimmy hastily; "I won't any more. But as I was saying, my ballast is upset with this string on my leg and I can't fly straight. And I was thinking that perhaps with your sharp teeth, and your clever paws, you might get it off for me. Your paws are SO clever!"

"I see," said Fatty. "Why didn't you say so in the first place? Beating about the bush that way never gets anywhere with me. Though that string DID taste nice and salty,"



as he remembered the knot that had been in the Hired Man's hands till it got their flavor. "I don't mind topping off on that big knot," and Fatty fell to at Jimmy's ankle.

Both friends were too busy to notice, as stealthy foot-steps came up behind them.

XXIX

FATTY PUTS UP A FIGHT

Alert as both Jimmy Crow and Fatty Chuck ordinarily were, they had been too busy biting the string off Jimmy's leg to notice when Barnyard Tom came sneaking from the hay-mow.

Now Tom hated both so keenly that he hardly knew which he'd rather attack. Jimmy Crow had teased him without mercy.—There was the little episode of tweaking his tail.

On the other hand, the wood-chuck looked so like a rat that Tom had had a prejudice against him the first time he saw him, one day,—trying to pick up a few kernels with the hens.

Tom's morals were peculiar. He had no scruples himself against making 'way with as many little chickens as he could snatch, in the face of their mothers' punishing wings.

But for Fatty to steal their feed was quite a different matter.

Tom felt it was HIS barn-yard,—except when Lop Ear the Hound came around. And every gnawing, rat-like creature that crossed his sight was his own par-tic-u-lar prey.

He therefore made first for Fatty Chuck,—much as he would have enjoyed leaping straight on Jimmy Crow and settling scores once and for all.

Now Fatty Wood-chuck had never yet shirked a fight. But he had always preferred to fight on his own grounds. At the first sound of Tom's hiss, he whirled about so fiercely that the cat was surprised into backing off a trifle.

Then Fatty made for his hole—Jimmy, mean-time, was high in the air, cawing his contempt of Thomas.—My, how Fatty ran! Fairly tumbling over backwards at the last, he landed in the little cave he had dug under the barn-yard fence.

But Tom was close behind. And though he didn't quite make it, he settled himself down to watch that hole as if he meant to stay all night.

A long hour Fatty waited,—too angry now

to sleep, and anxious to get out, just because he knew he couldn't. If he had believed the way to be safely open, he would have lost all desire to go out again, perhaps till morning. And by that time Tom would long since have given up the chase.

But after waiting till he just couldn't stand the idea of being kept prisoner another moment, Fatty crept up to the entrance of his den to see what the chances were. And there was Tom watching with that green sparkle in his half-closed eyes.

Without more ado Fatty set his long front teeth in Thomas's nose and clamped his jaws over them.

"Pf-f-f-f-ff!" yelled Tom, trying to back away from the hole.

But Fatty held on tight, and even began doing some backing himself. And though Tom braced all fours, Fatty had the advantage of having a grip on a tender spot, and Tom was forced to ease up, till his nose was as far as he could thrust it into the hole.

XXX

THE RAT TRAP

Fatty Chuck, having convinced Barn-yard Tom that he was not one to be trifled with, suddenly let go his hold, and the old cat som-er-saul-ted back out of the hole with a hiss like a gander.

Thereafter there was to be a truce between them, Fatty felt convinced; and he could visit the barn-yard whenever he pleased. There was often a carrot or a handful of potato peels that the hens were too full to eat, and these things spelled a rare treat for Fatty, what with his steady diet of clover.

"Why should they feast while I starve?" he had often asked himself. "Surely I have a right to what would otherwise go to waste."

And growing bolder as the days went by, and his presence went quite un-noticed by Barn-yard Tom, he even took to sampling the pan of milk that was every evening poured for that animal after the milk pails had been skimmed. The warm, frothy fluid was really

more to Fatty's liking than anything he had yet tasted, unless of course, it were carrot,—of which he never tired.

One night the Hired Man found the rats had gnawed the boots which he had greased and hung in the loft where he slept. He promptly brought out a trap and baited it with the thing nearest to hand, namely, a half-gnawed carrot,—which he rubbed with candle grease. (The rats were supposed to be lured by the grease.)

As an actual fact, it was not the grease, but the carrot, that proved the lure to his catch. All that day Fatty Chuck had been confined to his hole by the activities of the farm-yard, for they were hoisting the hay to the loft, and both the Hired Man and Lop Ear, the Hound, were in and about the place so lively that Tom had taken refuge on the fence-post directly above Fatty's front door.

Once the black of night had settled down on the barn-yard and Tom had gone aloft to watch a rat-hole, Fatty emerged, so starved and cross that he decided to give himself a treat. Instead of making his slow way to the clover patch as usual, he therefore sniffed

about till he had found the milk pan. In that he found but a few unsatisfying drops. But from somewhere near he could smell the delicious fragrance of a carrot.

Now, Fatty isn't very used to being out at night, and he couldn't see as well as he'd have liked to. But he could follow his nose.

A moment later there was a snap of steel wires, and poor Fatty lay groaning, with one of his clever little black paws caught fast in the trap.

What should he do, he asked himself with wildly beating heart, as the throbs of pain shot up his fore-arm, bringing the cold sweat out on his forehead. Wait till morning and be taken alive? Not he!

No wilderness creature with any spirit will ever be taken alive. Not, at least, if he can help himself.

What, then, should he do?

XXXI

A DESPERATE REMEDY

No, sir-ee, Fatty Chuck was not the fellow tamely to allow himself to be caught in a trap!

So, therefore, when he found one of his clever little black fore-paws fast in that thing of luring carrots and steel wires, the first thing he tried was jerking out of its clutch.—But to no avail!

Next he tried to run away from it. He managed to drag the wicked thing across the barn-yard to his hole, into which he backed as vi-gor-ous-ly as possible. But though the trap was too big to follow him in, it refused to let go at his door-way, and he was perforce obliged to try some other method.

Fatty's next idea was to bury it and leave it fast in the ground.

But that didn't work, either. Although he managed, painfully enough, to cover it with earth with his one free paw and his two hand-like feet, it dug itself right out again the minute he with-drew.

It was most discouraging. But Fatty had a stubborn courage that would not allow him to despair.

Perhaps he could bury it a little deeper. And having tried that and failed to get free of its clinging jaws, he tried once more to dig himself into his hole, leaving the trap on the outside,—but with as little luck as before.

There seemed nothing better left to do than to tug. And tug he did, till his arm was numb with pain, and the light in the east roused the first birds to their morning greetings.

Desperate now as he thought of losing his freedom, poor Fatty settled himself to his one last alternative. He gnawed off his paw!

* * * *

When the Boy from the Valley Farm came by with his milking-pails a few minutes later, he stopped with a cry of dismay. For there beside the barn-yard fence, to which it had made a long trail in the dust, was a rat-trap. And in it lay the poor little black paw. And the limping trail that led to Fatty's fortress was dotted with blood.

"Poor little shaver!" pitied the boy, whose

heart had room in it for all wild things. "Poor, brave little chuck!"

"I must see to it, now, that he is left in peace, and that he finds it easy to get food." And he promptly laid the apple he had intended to eat before Fatty's doorway.

"I suppose his leg will heal," he mused, "but how he must suffer! I think I'll leave him a saucer of milk every night and a carrot every morning." And he ran to the barn and got a whole handful of tender young carrots, and shoved them into the hole.

"But I wish I knew how to make Lop Ear and Thomas understand about him," he talked on to himself. "If I put a fence around him, he'll think he's in prison. I can train the dog to keep away from this neighborhood. But I don't know what to do about that wicked cat."

XXXII

A SILVER LINING

"Every cloud has a silver lining."

And so Fatty Wood-chuck found it.

Not that anything on earth can make up for the loss of one's paw! That furry little black hand that he had had to leave in the rat trap had been one of a working team of four with which he had tunneled his house, and dug his roots, and combed his fur, and run from his enemies.

And the last was the most important. For one could find food with only three paws, and one could still dig—though it was like rowing with one oar—around and around in a circle. But even that could be endured.

It was when Fatty tried to run that he saw how seriously hand-i-capped he was. (In fact, the very word hand-i-capped means having one's hand cut off. So you can see how serious it was!)

He could still run on three legs. But if before, it had been nip and tuck between him

and Tom, what would it be now that he was so crippled, he asked himself? And until he knew the answer, you may be sure he had no intention of going very far from home, hungry though he might be.

Still, there was a decidedly silver lining, as we have said, to his troubles. For whereas before he had to run the gauntlet of all the dangers of the barn-yard for the milk and carrots he loved, he now found them right on his front door at intervals, as his appetite demanded. And that was certainly what most wood-chucks would call being in clover.

Nor was Fatty Chuck unhappy at his forced se-clu-sion. At least not yet! It had never been hard to make Fatty happy. Plenty of good things to eat and a nice comfortable bed in which to snooze till it was time to eat again, and Fatty had about all he wanted in this world.

He hadn't thought yet about how hard it would now be for him to support a family and fight their battles, should the time ever come when he might want to have one. He was just living from day to day that summer. Jimmy Crow came once in a while to cheer

him up with a morsel of gossip. And then there was the Boy!

At first the matter of the carrots and the saucer of milk and other delicacies had been a mystery. Fatty was in too deep pain to be interested. He ate because he must, and asked no questions.

Later he took to peeking cautiously from just inside his doorway when the goodies arrived.

Then, assured that neither Tom nor Lop Ear were anywhere in sight, he took to creeping half out of his burrow when the milk dish arrived, and lapping it up from that stronghold. The Boy's presence at these times he came to take as a matter of course, as the Boy never made a quick move to startle his nerves.

But it was many weeks before he finally learned to come coaxingly to the Boy's outstretched hand to accept his carrot.

XXXIII

CLOSE OF KIN

"Back, sir! Leave him alone!" the Boy had sternly told the hound, when he made after Fatty Chuck.

And when Lop Ear saw that the Chuck enjoyed his master's protection, it was quite settled, so far as he was concerned.

Here-after Fatty was the Boy's private property, to be protected as such against all comers. And woe be to Barn-yard Tom should he ever again molest the lame Chuck!

"Hello, there!" a cheery voice sounded over-head one day, as Jimmy Crow alighted on the fence post just above Fatty's door.

"Hello, yourself!" grinned Fatty Chuck, poking just the tip of his nose out.

"Oh, come on out. What are you scared of?" laughed Jimmy. "Any one that's got it as soft as you, ought not to act as if there were a price on his head."

"Well, to tell the truth," said Fatty, emerging slowly and settling himself back on

his haunches, with his one little black paw across his chest, "it's Red-tail the Hawk that I'm really afraid of now."

"Well, I'll keep an eye out while I'm here," said Jimmy in his hoarse, friendly voice. "I can see just how you feel, though,—I can see just how you feel!

"Red-tail is not a pleasant visitor at best, and with your hand-i-cap—" eying the paw-less fore-leg pityingly, "it would certainly be hard to get away from him. Does he bother around here much?"

"Oh, every day—every day," asserted Fatty, gravely.

"Chicken, I suppose?" smiled Jimmy.

"No, sir—not as much as you'd suppose. In fact, I'm always ready to give an enemy his due, and I believe Red-tail has been slandered in that regard.

"It's rats most of the time he comes after. That's just why I have been so nervous, if the truth were known. Because, of course, my grandmother's third cousin once removed, was a member of the rat family, you know, and I've been told we chucks still bear a

certain family resemblance—though, for my part, I cannot see it at all."

"Nor I," agreed Jimmy politely. "The domestic rat—any dom-es-ti-cat-ed animal—is a de-gen-er-ate."

"Certainly there is no likeness in our habits," continued Fatty a bit ag-gress-ively. (Which means he was ready to fight for his point.) "We chucks are vegetarians, for one thing. While these barn rats—why, honestly, you wouldn't believe me if I were to tell you just how many baby chicks and eggs, those rats eat up in the night! I think, perhaps, Red-tail gets a lot of blame for that sort of thing when he isn't guilty at all.

"Red-tail has a cousin who IS a bad one. But Red-tail himself prefers a rat to a chicken any day in the week, and field-mice to field-corn. He is really the Farmer's friend."

"Curious how these reports get about," mused Jimmy. "Someone's cousin does a thing, and at once his whole family, kith and kin, is blamed for it and hunted down without mercy. But I should certainly keep a weather eye out for Red-tail, all the same, if I were you. Not that you do look in the least like a

rat," he hastened to add, "but you see—from so high up—a hawk is apt to take any little fellow—"

"There you go again! I'm NOT a little fellow!" Fatty in-ter-rupt-ed crossly.

Jimmy changed the subject a-brupt-ly.

"I'm going to bring someone to see you tomorrow that I think you'll be interested to meet," said Jimmy sooth-ing-ly.



XXXIV

MAMMY PAYS A CALL

"Well, I certainly am glad to see you!" said Fatty Chuck, hurrying from his burrow under the barnyard fence.

It was Mammy Cottontail, come with wee Timothy, the brown baby bunny, for a call.

Overhead, just high enough to be out of gun's reach, circled Jimmy Crow, on guard.

"I'm so sorry to hear about your paw," said Mammy, referring to the trap from which Fatty had gnawed his way to freedom. "I certainly don't know what I should do if I were to lose a paw,—even a fore-paw,—because if I couldn't run faster than a fox, I wouldn't last a day.—No, sir, I wouldn't last one day!

"By the way, aren't we some sort of cousins?—There's those gnawing front teeth of yours, now.

"The Cottontails have always been quite ce-le-brated for their front teeth, and I see you have the same kind."

"Yes," agreed Fatty proudly. "My two long front teeth have roots that extend clear to the back of my skull. And the more I wear them off gnawing my food, the faster they grow. My cousin Benny Beaver has the same kind of teeth, else he could never fell trees as he does."

"And then if you'll notice"—opening his mouth to show her,—"behind those two long cutting teeth of ours, Benny and I have a way of sucking in our cheeks and keeping out the dust and chips that we dig and gnaw. That's the only reason we don't get the dirt into our throats, you know."

"Is that so?" piped Timothy. "Won't you please open your mouth again, so I can see it?" Fatty obliged him, for he was proud of his teeth and the curious arrangement of his cheeks.

'Why, you've got that kind of mouth yourself, child," laughed Mammy Cottontail. "Didn't you know that?"

"Yes," turning again to Fatty Chuck, "it seems to be a family trait. I recall that my mother, and my mother's mother, and, in fact, every relative as far back as I can re-

member, has had that kind of mouth. And I can see Timothy is going to be the same way," and she glanced proudly to where that youngster had started nibbling one of Fatty's carrots.

"Did you know that Mother Red Squirrel's family are all the same way, too?"

"No, really?" exclaimed Fatty.

"It's a fact!" declared Mammy Cottontail. "And so with my cousin out west, Jack Rabbit, and my second cousin, Shirr Chipmunk, and my little cousins, Jerry the Jumping Mouse, and Minnie Meadow Mouse!"

"Whew!" gasped Fatty. "I had no idea we had so many family connections."

"Oh, yes, indeed," said Mammy Cottontail. "There is no family anywhere near as large as ours,—nor as old. Why, we can trace our ancestry back thousands of years!

"Didn't you know that even Unk Wunk the Porcupine is a sort of relation of ours?—and Barnie the Rat, as well,—I grieve to say."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Fatty Chuck. "That's always the way. The minute one begins to look too far into a person's family history,

there is sure to be someone you are ashamed of for everyone that you pride yourself on!"

Fatty's further remarks were suddenly cut short by a com-mo-tion that broke out just over-head.



XXXV

JIMMY HAS AN ACCIDENT

Now, Jimmy Crow had a wonderful eye for beauty.

Perhaps it was because he was dull and black himself. But every time he saw a glittering object, be it a mica-streaked pebble that shone silver in the sunshine, or the lid of a tin can on the ash heap, he made straight for it.

Not that he carried these things home to his nest! By no means. Some other crow might steal them. He had a secret hiding-place for his treasures in an old wood-pecker's hole that no crow could get more than his head into.

And from this treasure-chest he would often select some play-thing with which to while away the hours, to the great envy of less fortunate crows.

Often they raced him all over the woods in their effort to get his toy away from him. It became a game of "tag." or "hide-and-seek,"

which Jimmy enjoyed quite as much as he did his plaything.

When Fatty Chuck and Mammy Cottontail were so harshly interrupted in their gossip under the barn-yard fence, Jimmy had been circling high above the corn-field, studying the lay of the land.

He was happy in the fact that the men were all down in the pasture pitching hay, when he suddenly spied a glittering object on the ground between the barn and the house.

It was a silver spoon that had been thrown out by mistake when the dishpan was emptied and to Jimmy it seemed the loveliest thing he had ever laid eyes on.

Darting rapidly down upon it, Jimmy attempted to seize it in his beak and fly away with it. But the spoon was heavier than he had counted on. In fact, it took him quite a few minutes to get it to balance.

Meantime Barn-yard Tom had been eying the in-trud-er with an evil glance in his yellow eyes.

Creeping forward in the shadow of the barn, as stealthily as velvet paws would permit, Tom suddenly made one of his great leaps. And



"Now I have you."

though Jimmy fluttered into the air just in time to escape the full force of his landing, Tom got one claw tight fast into Jimmy's wing.

"Now I have you!" hissed Thomas. "So you would tweak my tail, would you? Well, now, I have no great fondness for crow's meat—"

"Yes, I know you prefer song birds," cawed Jimmy saucily. "But I'll sing a song you won't forget, if you don't let go of that wing!"

"P-f-f-f-f-!" said Tom. "I'm not fond of crow's meat, but I'm going to have some for supper, just the same!"

"Kuk, kuk, kuk!" said Jimmy. "Let go of my wing!" For Thomas's claws were beginning to hurt. And he beat the great cat across the face with the wing that was free. "I'll tweak your tail good for this, see if I don't!"

"Yeow! You will when you get the chance to!" snarled Tom.

XXXVI

FRIENDS TO THE RESCUE

"Oh, dear, isn't there something we can do to help?" wailed Mammy Cottontail as she saw Jimmy with the cat's claws fast in his wing.

"What can *we* do?" squeaked Fatty Chuck, sitting up on his hind legs with his one good paw folded across his breast.

For Jim Crow was certainly getting the worst of it. Often and often he had pinched Thomas's tail when he could come on the cat unawares. And never before had Tom got more than a mouthful of feathers—if he did that!

But this time his claws were thrust fast into Jimmy's wing, and flutter as he would, the bird could not free himself. Just now he was trying to make Tom let go by buffeting him across the face with his one free wing. But Thomas remembered the tail tweakings and hung on.

Jim Crow had tweaked the Cat's tail once too often. And how it might all have ended, goodness only knows.

But just as Tom was reaching for Jimmy's throat, Fatty Chuck—made one of his mad rushes at his old enemy and set his teeth in the cat's other paw.

He was back in his hole in an instant, was Fatty. For what can a lame wood-chuck do against a cat twice his size? But his action had served to distract Tom for a minute from his attempt at Jimmy's throat.

Next Mammy Cottontail, roused by the memory of Jimmy's friendship to herself, made one of her mammoth leaps, striking Tom across the nose just as she had the time she rescued her baby bunny. But, of course, it didn't do Jimmy any good, except to put off the evil moment a little longer. Jimmy was quite helpless, though he never ceased to beat his one free wing in Thomas's face and tear at the furry black sides with his feet.

"Help, help!" cawed Jimmy, wishing that some of his flock might hear, and come and peck the great cat's eyes out.

And help came, though Jimmy's call had been in crow talk.

It was the Boy from the Valley Farm, sent back for a jug of cider cool from the well.

"You wretched cat!" shouted the Boy, making for Thomas.

The next instant Jimmy was ready to faint with fright, for human hands were feeling him over and washing out the wound in his wing. And the next thing he knew he was inside the big farm kitchen, being cuddled into a soft little basket hung well out of Tom's reach on a nail in the wall.

Jimmy was a prisoner!

"There!" said the Boy, "I'll bring you in something nice to eat in a minute. But first I think I'd better put some vaseline on that wing."

But Jimmy didn't understand. He only knew that his wing hurt dreadfully, and that he expected the Boy to eat him any minute.

XXXVII

A MERRY PRISONER

Jimmy Crow was more frightened than ever now.

For though the Boy had rescued him from Barn-yard Tom, Jimmy feared the Boy the more.

While his rescuer bound up his wounded wing, Jimmy only knew that it hurt. And when he found he couldn't fly, he refused to eat.

But after a night in the basket on the kitchen wall, Jimmy felt so much more comfortable that he awoke rav-en-ously hungry. Then the Boy came with scraps from the table, and Jimmy thought he had never tasted anything half so delicious.

Of course, he kept a weather eye out for Tom, when the cat came meowing to the door. But, once he had spied him through the open window making off for the barn, Jimmy was ready for further discoveries.

He accordingly flopped down to the floor, falling with quite a thud, with only one wing to sustain him, and landing in quite the opposite corner from the one he had set out to explor.

Breakfast cooked, the kitchen was for the time deserted. In a spot of sunshine on the window sill lay some chips of broken glass, gleaming and glittering in a way that delighted the great bird.

Seizing one of these in his beak, he looked about for a place to hide his treasure. The oven door was open, for the coal range was not in use this summer, and Jimmy just managed to wedge his treasure into one corner.

But there were other fas-ci-nat-ing pieces of broken glass, and Jimmy could not rest till he had stowed every last one of them inside the oven.

He found a silver thimble on the porch and promptly buried it, away in the heart of the flower bed.

When, later on, the Boy shut the cat in the corn-crib and turned Jimmy loose in the barnyard, he had the time of his life feeding with

the startled hens, and making awkward, one-sided efforts to fly.

It didn't take many bribes of sweet-corn to make him realize that the Boy was a friend, and for a time, while his wing was still disabled, he consented to ride about on the latter's head. In this way he made long jaunts through the forbidden corn-fields,—and even the Hired Man dared not touch him.

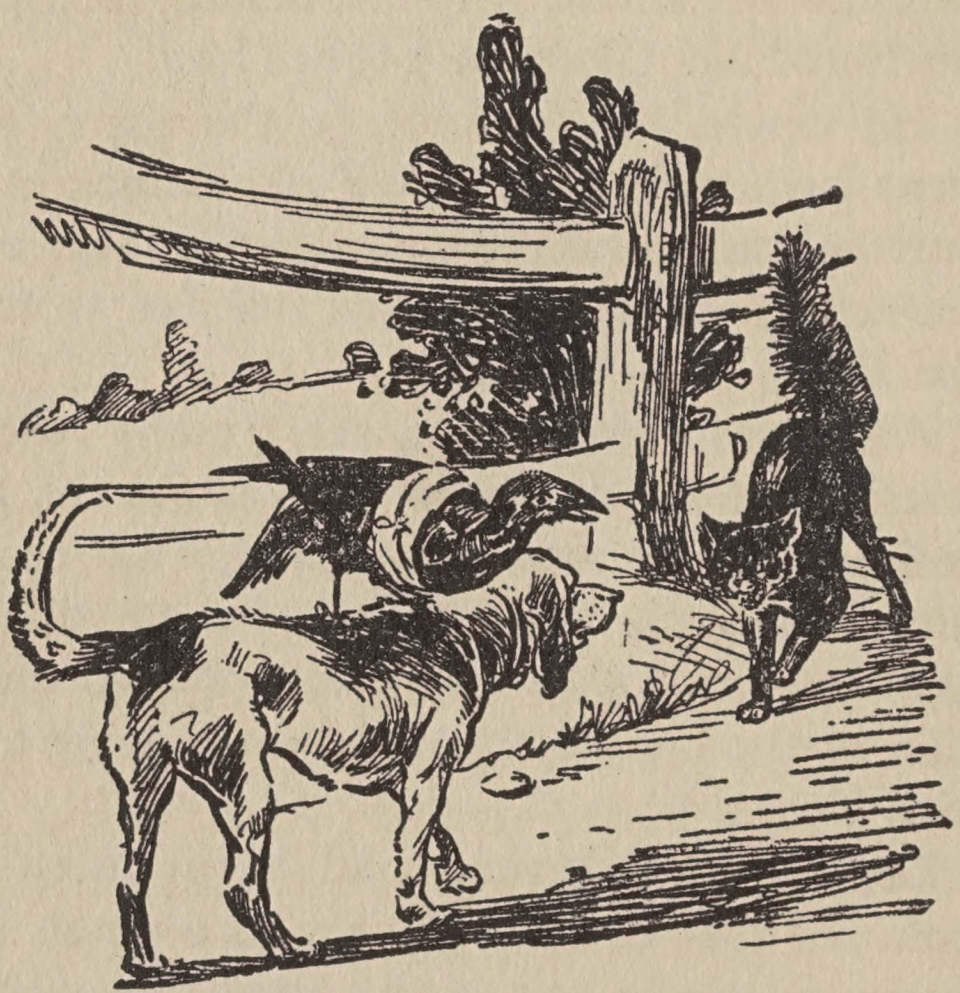
He cawed his defiance to the scare-crow, went frequently to call on Fatty Chuck in his burrow under the barn-yard fence, and even learned to fly, in his ragged fashion, to meet the Boy.

As his wing grew stronger, Jimmy lost all fear of being kept a prisoner, should the Boy desire it. But meantime he saw no reason why he should not amuse himself till the bandage was taken off. And he also had a plan in the back of his head for getting even with Tom.

Lop Ear the Hound had been instructed from the first to treat Jimmy as a guest, and it was a delight to see the great dog meekly standing by, while Jimmy tramped up and down his back, tucking bright pebbles and gay

bits of yarn into his fur, and cawing at their mutual enemy, the cat.

Then one day Jimmy found the very chance he was looking for to punish Thomas.



XXXVIII

THE RUBY THROATS

Jimmy Crow had often admired Mr. and Mrs. Ruby-throat, the Humming-birds, as they flew about the garden.

Indeed, he had sometimes taken tiny Mr. Ruby-throat's red vest for some wonderful jewel and flown quite close before he found out his mistake.

Whether it was because he was so black and ugly himself, or because of his love of shiny things, certainly Jimmy had felt a special interest in the Humming-bird family long before he found himself living in the barn-yard with a bandage around his injured wing.

It was a jewel of a nest that the Ruby-throats had made,—a little round thing just big enough for a baby's fist. Mrs. Ruby-throat had cunningly lined it with bits of a soft sponge she had found near the cross-roads school-house. And you cannot imagine anything cuter than that little nest, plastered fast

to a limb of the lilac bush under the store-room window.

As the long golden days wore on, and Jimmy found time on his hands, it became his delight to watch Mr. and Mrs. Ruby-throat and the two babies—now nearly as large as their parents,—hovering before the holly-hocks that bordered the garden walk.

The first thing in the morning, they always thrust their slender beaks into the honey-suckles to drink the sap. And my, how they enjoyed it!

Jimmy used to watch them—as they taught their fat, elf-like babes that quivering motion of the wings that holds them just in front of the flower while they thrust their beaks in. And how he envied Mr. Ruby-throat his ruddy velvet vest!

It had been impossible to get acquainted, for the Ruby-throats were terrified when they heard Jimmy's harsh caw of greeting. But Jimmy used to peek at them from inside the window.

Barn-yard Tom was also interested in the Humming-bird family,—though in quite a different way. And so long as there had been

larger nests to raid, he had held them in reserve, as a house-wife holds a can of something extra dainty on her pantry shelf.

Jimmy was not the only bird who considered Tom a wicked fellow. While the young birds were lea rning to fly, scarce a day had passed upon which he had not crept into some tree in the dead of night when every bird was asleep, and carried off a young one.

So one morning early, Jimmy had come upon the cat creeping, creeping, creeping along the fence to where he could watch the Ruby-throats,—as they explored the hearts of the holly-hocks, and swallowed a few of the teeny spiders that they found between the petals.

Then they made a tour of the near-by trees to see if there weren't holes bored by the yellow-bellied sap-suckers and other larger birds,—where they might find a few drops left.

XXXIX

GETTING EVEN WITH THOMAS

Now the Boy from the Valley Farm had always punished Barn-yard Thomas when he caught him slinking back from the woods with a young bird in his mouth.

But it did no good. It only made the old cat do on the sly what before he had done openly.

So the minute Jimmy Crow, strutting forth into the early morning sunshine, with the bandage on his wing making flight all but impossible, had seen Tom creeping toward the Humming-bird nest, he knew what was up.

He also knew he had that same cat to thank for his wounded wing and his loss of freedom. Add to that his natural admiration of the Ruby-throats and you can see how he felt about it!

Now, Jimmy was a wise old crow. He had seen that the Boy was kind. He had seen

him beat the cat when Tom came with a bird in his mouth. And he knew that the Boy would punish the cat if he knew.

Jimmy, therefore, did the one thing left for a bird with a broken wing to do. He promptly set up such a shrill "Kuk! Kuk!" of alarm that the Boy heard and came on the run.

Another moment and Tom had been seized by the scruff of his neck and locked in the barn, and Jimmy had been given a whole ear of sweet-corn for a reward of merit.

"My, I'd have killed that cat if he'd got my humming-birds," the Boy told his father that noon when he carried the men's dinner out to the hay-field.

"And the worst of it is, he'll go straight after them again the minute he gets out. I am beginning to think we can't keep a cat. The barn is full of rats, but he'll destroy all the birds before he gets through."

"I know," said his father, "and we need the birds, not alone for their song, but because they protect the crops. There is nothing like birds for catching harmful insects."

"Can't we do something about it?" asked the Boy, much distressed.

"I was just thinking," said his father, stroking his beard. "We might put something around the trunks of the trees the birds nest in, so Tom could not climb." And he outlined a plan that set the Boy's feet to tripping eagerly back to the barn.

"What are you going to do now?" cawed Jimmy curiously, as he saw the Boy hauling out a collection of old tin cans.

The Boy of course did not understand. "Good Jimmy!" was all he answered, stroking the crow's black feathers affectionately. "You are my right-hand man, aren't you, now-a-days?"

Neither did Jimmy understand what the Boy was doing when he cut the sides of the cans into long, shining strips and then bent them flat. But he felt very sure it had something to do with Tom, and he cawed his derision as he saw the latter's green eyes peering through a knot-hole.

"I said I'd get even! — Now you watch!" called Jimmy tri-um-phant-ly.

XL

A USE FOR TIN CANS

"What in the world is he up to? asked Fatty Chuck, peeking from his burrow under the fence to watch the Boy bending old tin cans into strips.

"He's going to fix that Cat with those," replied Jimmy Crow, stalking around the barn-yard with his wing in its sling.

As an actual fact, Jimmy didn't know half so much as he pretended. But he did know that Tom was "in bad" with the Boy for killing birds.

"What do you suppose he can be up to?" asked Mammy Cottontail, as she spied the Boy striding past her bramble-bush with a shining bundle under his arm, and hammer and nails in his pockets.

And "What is he going to do in our woods?" asked Robin Red-breast of Mrs. Robin. And Black-Mask the Yellow-throat peered and peeked, following the Boy from tree to tree.

In fact, there were many curious pairs of eyes watching from behind the leaves and beneath the underbrush as the Boy strode down the Old Logging Road.

He began with the oak in which Mr. and Mrs. Wood-Thrush had reared their family. Taking two of the strips of tin, which he had flattened out from the sides of the old tomato cans, he notched their inner sides with the shears till he could fit the pair of them around the tree-trunk in the manner of a little boy's collar.

And when they were tacked in place, there was a shelf of tin around the trunk, just too high for Tom to jump over if he leapt from the ground. While climbing up the trunk, his head would come plump against the shelf, and he would need wings himself to get around it.

Next came Betty Bluebird's elm, then the Cat-bird's willow, and after that the tree in which Tattle-tale the Jay had his hole. Thus the Boy went through the fringe of woods bordering the Old Logging Road.

The only trees he failed to put the cat-guards on were those whose branches inter-

laced with those of adjoining trees that a cat could climb.

"Hurray, hurray, hurray!" sang Mr. Wood-Thrush. "We are safe, we are safe!" And he voiced that peculiar note of his so like a kiss.

"So far, so good!" exclaimed the Boy, when the last tin had been tacked in place. "Wild cats or tame, they won't climb THOSE trees! That's one thing sure!"

But Black-Mask and Betty Blue-bird and the rest were not content with seeing the Boy go whistling back to the farm at the foot of Mt. Olaf. Very, very cautiously they alighted on the shiny tin plat-forms, stepping high and ready any instant to take flight. And how they peeked and peered at the under side, and wondered what the things were for!

At first Black-Mask was for moving at once, for fear something dreadful were going to happen. He always was a sus-pi-cious fellow.

But Mrs. Thrush had known and watched the Boy all summer, and even talked with him, and eaten the crumbs and bits of suet he had sprinkled for her in the early spring. And she had every confidence in him.

But Jimmy Crow was watching Tom!

XLI

A JOKE ON THOMAS

"Caw, caw, caw!" laughed Jimmy Crow, as he spied Tom the Barn-yard Cat, slinking along the Old Logging road.

"He's after a young bird," Fatty Chuck confided to Mammy Cottontail.

Black-Mask, the Yellow-throat, peered suspiciously from behind a leaf, and Betty Bluebird set up a distressing wail, flying about in a manner that should have directed the cat's attention quite away from her young Bob and Betty up in the elm tree.

Meow, the Cat-bird, flew on ahead mockingly. And Tattle-tale, the Jay, circled about just over the tree-tops harshly advising the younger birds to be on their guard.

But pretty Mrs. Wood-Thrush continued to call her youngsters from one good feeding-ground to another with that peculiar note of hers so like a vigorous kiss. For she had watched the Boy tacking the tin guard on her tree, and she had studied the odd little plat-

form enough to have her own idea of what it was for.

As luck would have it, Tom chose the very tree in which Black-Mask had his nest. And you should have seen the fuss he made! (He and Mrs. Black-Mask together! Especially the Missus!)

But Jimmy Crow, whose wing was by now quite healed, though the Boy had not yet taken the bandage off, made his way to a concealing branch and watched with keen amusement.

First Tom tried to climb the trunk, but quickly found he could not get beyond the jutting shelf of tin.

Then he dropped to the ground, attempting to leap to the trunk above the tin. But the guard had been placed too high.

Next he scrambled into the branches of the neighboring trees to see if he could not crawl across from some inter-lacing branch.—But Black-Mask, with his customary caution, had selected a tree—or allowed Mrs. Black-Mask to select one—that stood quite by itself.

Tom gave it up in disgust, to Jimmy Crow's delight.

But it was not yet time to crow. There were other trees to try. But though Thomas went the rounds of all those the Boy had put the little tin shelves around, it was of no use. The birds who dwelt in them were safe.

Thomas would have to go deeper into the woods if he were to catch a bird for supper,—and that he was loathe to do.

"Now will you be good?" cawed Jimmy, flapping along behind, as the old Cat made for the barn-yard, frightening the birds full as much as Tom had done.

"See how well Jimmy can fly!" exclaimed the Boy, as the crow made for his shoulder. "I do believe his wing is healed. I'm going to take the bandage off."

The next moment the crow was free.

With one hoarse caw of delight, the great bird stretched his wings and rose into the air.

"Good-by," he was trying to say. But the Boy only stared after him in his disappointment.

"You can't really tame a full grown crow," comforted his father. "But come here, and I'll show you something."

XLII

BURIED TREASURE

The Boy from the Valley Farm was disappointed when Jimmy Crow flew away.

The bird had been such a clever, affectionate pet, managing even with his injured wing to flop to the Boy's shoulder.

But the instant the bandage had been taken off he had risen into the air and made straight for the woods.

"Come with me," the Boy's father had then said mysteriously, beckoning him down the old logging road. "It's a good thing, in one way, that bird didn't care to stay on, or there wouldn't have been a spoon in the kitchen. Do you know what your mother just found in the wood-pile?"

"What?" asked the Boy, following through the moon-lit woods to the right of the old logging road. "What's Jimmy been up to?"

He's only hidden every silver spoon on the place in that wood-pile," laughed his father. "One by one they have been disappearing, but

never when any one was looking. That bird is certainly a sly one."

"Ho!" laughed the Boy. "Then I guess I know how all that broken glass got into the oven."

"And now," said his father, striding past Pollywog Pond, "I have an idea I know what became of your sister's ring." And he led the way to the particular tall pine in which Jimmy and his cronies had their nests.

Jimmy had arrived long before, and greetings had been exchanged, and now all was quiet, for it was away beyond the time when a crow can keep awake. The tree was covered with black forms all dreaming of the day's aer-o-planing.

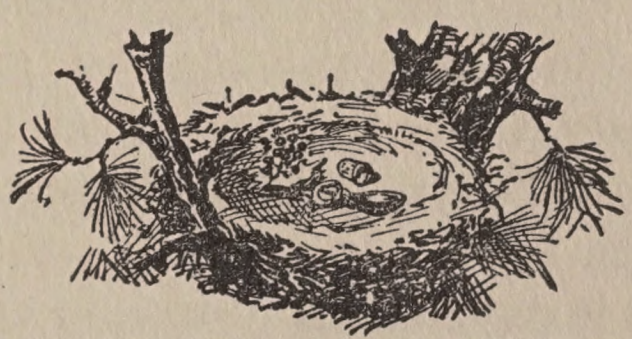
"Step softly now," whispered the man. "I discovered it quite by accident. They were moving it from an old woodpecker's hole."

Away down in the crotch of a broken limb, where some high wind had blown it, huddled an old crow's nest. It was rammed in there in such a position that no self-respecting crow would have dreamed of raising a family in it, even had she cared to locate so near the ground. But this very fact was its protection.

Carefully gathering up the untidy-looking mass of sticks,—which held together surprisingly well, because crows' nests are built to withstand high winds,—the Boy's first surprise was to find it softly lined with dried grass and horsehair. There was also something in it that felt hard to his finger tips.

Carrying it out into the full light of the moon, he gave a gasp of amazement. There, in a great, glittering heap, lay bits of broken glass, a colored pebble, the top of a shiny tin can, two or three red feathers, a small harness buckle and a spray of red berries,—Jimmy's playthings!

And in the very midst of the assemblage there lay the Little Girl's lost ring!



XLIII

INDIAN SUMMER

"That's no field mouse!" said Frisky's nose, as the red fox pup circled to windward of the tiny squeaking sounds.

"That's the Boy at the Valley Farm! Now I'll just pretend not to see him at all till I get behind that rock, then I'll race for the woods."

For Frisky didn't know that the thing the Boy was pointing at him was only a pair of field glasses. And he wouldn't have stayed, even had he known. Frisky did not like to be watched. He therefore did exactly as he had planned, crossing the field with seeming lack of interest in anything save the purple and yellow of asters and golden-rod and the scarlet of wood-bine, and the blue of the Indian summer sky, till he felt himself out of range of any gun the Boy might have concealed about his person.

At the instant of his discovery that it was one of those dangerous human creatures that sat there like a stump, Frisk had cocked his

ears sharply and leapt fully two feet into the air in his surprise.

That was the only sign he made, however, of the extreme anxiety that set his heart to thumping, till he was just on the edge of the woods; then he suddenly looked back with one of his thin, husky barks, to know why the Boy should have tried to fool him.

And afterwards, from the shelter of the barberry vines that fringed the old stone wall, he peered and peeked and wondered about it, —as long as the Boy remained.

"Guess he's harmless," he finally decided. "I wonder if it wouldn't be fun to go chase Fatty Chuck!"

Now Fatty had been getting very sleepy.

He always goes to sleep before the first cold comes, and he scarcely wakes again till he is quite sure that spring has come.

All the long, golden October days, therefore, he nibbled drowsily in the cabbage patch, or stuffed himself on string-beans, or lugged little wind-fall apples to the den under the fence. His appetite was un-be-liev-able, and his sides were getting so round that when he went to sleep standing up, as he sometimes did of a

sunny afternoon, he simply rolled over and over till he woke up again.

And what with getting so fat and jolly, and feeling so drowsy, his sauciness returned, and he tweaked the cat's tail till that crusty animal left his pan of milk for the hay-loft,—which was just what Fatty wanted. He then proceeded to drink the milk himself.

One thing that made him bold, despite his injured fore-leg, was that his skin was so thick. A gun-shot scarcely scratched it. Twice, when Fatty had been munching cabbages, the Hired Man at the Valley Farm had taken a shot at him, but each time Fatty had come off with nothing more than a scratch, and, scrambling to safety, had chuckled his defiance.

"He'll make the best little supper I ever had," thought Frisky Fox, as he ambled a-tiptoe down to the Valley Farm. "I'm much obliged to him, I'm sure, for plumping up so."

XLIV

FATTY AND THE RED FOX PUP

"Yes, sir, I'm certainly much obliged to Fatty Chuck for plumping up so," thought Frisky, the red fox pup, as he tripped his furtive way to the Valley Farm.

"He'll probably be too sleepy even to run."

But in this the fox was mistaken.

Fatty was never sleepy when his life was at stake.

He was nibbling at the under-side of a cabbage at the moment Frisky found him, and though he recognized the seriousness of the situation,—a fox can run much faster than a chuck,—he was prepared for this very kind of emergency, and he simply popped into the secret tunnel he had dug from the cabbage-patch to his home.

But if Fatty were prepared for the meeting, so also was Frisky Fox. That amazingly wise youngster simply sniffed out Fatty's other

entrance hole, and waited till his keen black nose told him Fatty was inside.

Then—he began to dig!

My, how the dirt flew, as Frisky set himself to dig out that Chuck. And how angrily Fatty chuckled as he tried to snap his jaws in Frisky's nose,—without running the risk of having the tables turned!

Then he, too, started to dig!

Frisky dug and dug and dug. And three-pawed Fatty also dug and dug and dug. And the nearer Frisky thought he was getting to his supper, the farther that supper was digging his way in the opposite direction.

And after all, Fatty was the best equipped for digging—what with his webbed toes, and his ears which shut like furry doors to keep the dirt out, and his powerful little hind legs, which could close in the tunnel behind him as he advanced.

The long and the short of it was, that Frisky gave up in disgust—only to see, to his own amazement, that Fatty had at last arrived in a neat little den beneath the roots of a hemlock. And there he sat, just out of reach, the roots being so closely woven, in



"Frisky gave up in disgust."

their twistings and turnings, that a fox could not squeeze between.

That's what! There sat Fatty Chuck, whistling a warning to every creature within hearing distance of his squeaky little voice, warning them that Frisky Fox was out on a hunting trip.

At least Fatty thought he was safe!—As an actual fact he didn't know Frisky Fox. For the red pup was no fox to give up like that. Frisky had set out to get that wood-chuck, and he meant to have him. And no sooner did he see how impossible it was to squeeze himself between the hemlock roots than he set out to dig beneath them.

And Fatty Chuck had nothing left to do, but to dig himself another tunnel,—and tunnel himself into the edge of the woods, where he took to a hollow log.

But as that took all night, Frisky had long since given up the chase.

The danger now was in the fact that Fatty didn't know the woods, and all that lurked there.

XLV

NEW FRIENDS FOR OLD

Fatty Chuck peered warily from his un-ac-cus-tomed quarters in the hollow log.

The moon shone cold and crisp through the can-o-py of the forest. And its beams slanted off mys-ter-i-ous-ly here and there as they struck some bit of rotten, phos-phor-es-cent wood.

(Phos-phor-es-cence, you know, is the thing that makes lightning bugs shine in the dark. Nobody knows much about it. But it certainly seems a bit spooky to see dead stumps gleaming in the shadows of the wood-land.)

Fatty had worked all night, but when he looked about him, straining eyes and ears to the new sights and sounds that now sur-round-ed him, he didn't feel the least bit sleepy. Instead, he shivered inside his furs, and it wasn't such a very cold night either.

A screech owl in a branch just overhead suddenly set his weird cry to echoing through

the listening silence. And Fatty's hair fairly rose on end at the suddenness of it.

You see, down under-ground, Fatty generally has his furry ears closed so that they won't get full of dirt, and that way he can scarcely hear a thing. So he had really never heard an owl before, quite so close to. And if he had had any drow-si-ness left in his system, he would certainly have felt wide awake by now.

Still, morning did come at last. And my, how different was the world he now looked out on from the old barn-yard, beside which he had passed such a happy summer!

Frisky Fox passed very near once, but with the first rays of pink in the east, a spider had woven her web over the end of the log. And Frisky, seeing that web glittering with dew-drops, felt sure no one had gone inside, and so passed by.

That was once where his brains led him astray.

Later Fatty ventured forth to sun himself on a boulder, And so still he sat, and so perfectly did his brown fur match the rock, that he seemed a part of it. Old Man Lynx,

slinking past on a hunting expedition, looked straight at him without seeing him.

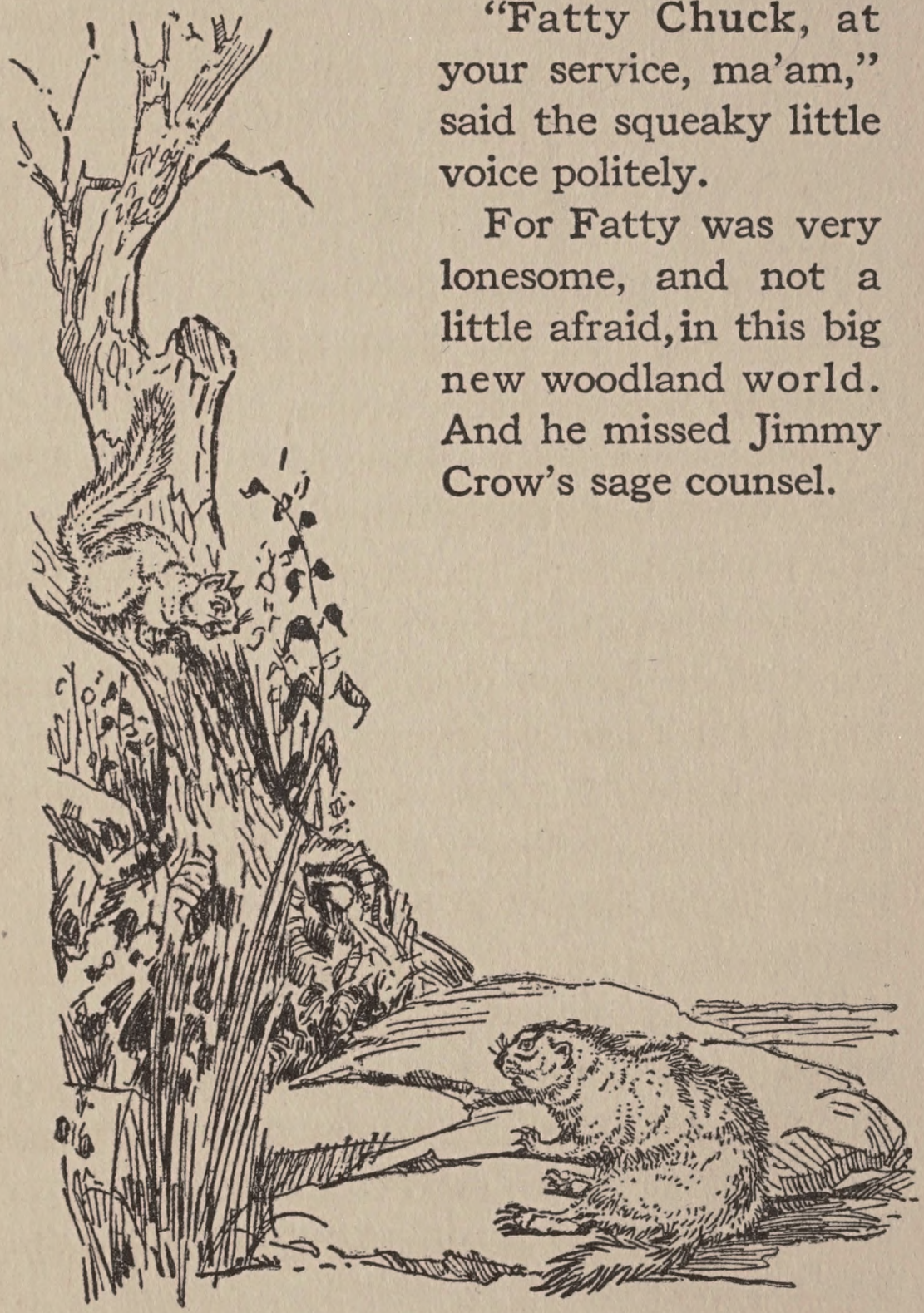
Now, Fatty was not the only watcher of the wood-land who matched his back-ground. He had been basking on the top of the boulder for at least an hour before he suddenly became aware that there was someone else there. Just beneath him, crouched against the side of the boulder, there was a little movement. Then Mother Grouse Hen fluttered to her feet and, with a soft cluck, summoned her eight half-grown chicks to her side and began picking at the little brown-capped mush-rooms that sprang from an old stump.

A moment later she was joined by Shadow Tail the Red Squirrel, who likewise set to nibbling at the mush-rooms.

"Hello, there," ventured Fatty the fearless, in his tiny squeaking voice.

"Hello yourself," barked Shadow Tail pertly, though his sharp eyes could but just make out the furry form on the boulder.

"Who's this?" clucked Mother Grouse Hen, nervously.



"Fatty Chuck, at your service, ma'am," said the squeaky little voice politely.

For Fatty was very lonesome, and not a little afraid, in this big new woodland world. And he missed Jimmy Crow's sage counsel.

XLVI

A LESSON ON MUSHROOMS

"How do you know those are not poison?" asked Fatty Chuck, from his post on the boulder.

"Oh, that's easy," said Shadow Tail, the Red Squirrel, nibbling daintily from the edge of a mushroom.

"There are only a few poison kinds one is in the least likely ever to get hold of.—Not that I'd advise YOU to eat any that hasn't been passed upon by some of us wood-folk who know them. Because if you DID get poisoned you'd never live to profit by what you had learned!"

"Dear me!" sighed Fatty, eyeing the mushrooms hungrily. "I don't want to take any chances. But will I always have to ask someone else?—What if there is no one else around to ask? Couldn't you possibly teach me the kinds that are good to eat?"

"Huh!" sniffed the little squirrel. "I guess you don't know what you are asking! Why there are three thousand different kinds!"

"Oh, do please teach me!" begged Fatty, fairly beside himself with longing.

"You can always eat puff balls, these little round ones that have no stems," said Shadow Tail. "Only break them open, to be sure there are no stems. They are not fresh and good unless they are white inside. When they get old the insides turn yellow. When it comes to toadstools and fungus, the poison kinds are so like the good ones that it really takes a very old experienced squirrel to know them. And if you eat the wrong kind, even a tiny taste, it might kill you!"

"Oh, dear!" sighed Fatty. "That doesn't make me feel any the less hungry right now!"

"But I will show you one so deadly poison that you must not even touch it," said Shadow Tail; and he led Fatty softly through the dancing shadows that fell from the sun-lit tree-tops to an umbrella-shaped toadstool that grew under an oak tree. The gills beneath the cap were white, the stem ended in a bulbous

root, and around the upper end of the stem hung a thin veil of membrane.

"One nibble at that, and you'd never see the sun rise again!" said Shadow Tail. "Then there's another that I'll have to show you some other time."

"Hm," sighed Fatty. "I don't know yet what I'm going to have for breakfast. I don't see anything around here but dead leaves and pine needles to make a meal off of."

"Come with me, then," laughed Shadow Tail, who loved to show off. "Just look here," and he scampered up a tree-trunk to a great cluster of orange-yellow fungus, which he began gobbling greedily.

"How do you think I am going to get up there?" asked Fatty crossly.

"Oh, that's so," giggled the little squirrel. "I forgot. You can't climb. Well, how about some nice red bar-berries? Then there's the sumac." And he danced to some low-growing bushes with heavy red plush seed clusters. But though the red squirrel scrambled up the velvety branches like a breath of wind, Fatty Chuck could only stand and stare in disgust.

"I do believe you're making sport of me," he chuckled angrily.

XLVII

A NIGHT OF TERROR

Fatty Chuck felt sure that Shadow Tail was having fun at his expense.

For how could Fatty climb the sumac bush?

He watched wrathfully while the little squirrel gnawed greedily at the red velvet of the stag-horn sumac berries.

"Oh, say, that's too bad," Shadow Tail apologized, dropping back beside him. "I'll show you something you *can* reach," and he scampered down to a swampy place where a delicate vine trailed over the golden-rod. It had dainty, three-fold leaves, and the clinging stem bore clusters of flat pods that looked for all the world like tiny lima beans.

"It's a bean—but what a little one!" exclaimed Fatty Chuck, setting his sharp teeth into one crisp pod that lay along the ground. "Um! How perfectly delicious!" And he crunched happily.

"And look here!" exclaimed Shadow Tail,

digging rapidly around the roots. A moment more and his clever paws had un-earthed a string of little round tubers covered with fine brown hairs. Opening one with his teeth, he took the enclosed nut up in his fore-paws, and gnawed off a bit or two. "Try it," he urged Fatty Chuck, handing him the remainder. "It's the Indian potato."

Fatty didn't care as much for the potatoes as for the beans, but there was this to be said in their favor,—he could always dig for them, whereas a good many of the beans hung beyond his reach.

Thanking his new friend for his neighborliness, he spent the rest of the mellow, sunny day fattening up for his winter sleep.

Then the long shadows began to creep about him, and it seemed to his im-ag-i-nation that the woods were peopled with shining eyes that everywhere peered at him hungrily.

His fur rose along his spine, despite himself. And though he could have gone back and finished the mushrooms around the stump, he decided he had better take to his hollow log again, there to await in chill and dread the coming back of the sun.

Why, oh, why, had he been so foolish, he asked himself, as not to have dug himself a burrow? It was all his greedy appetite, as he well knew. And if now he went to satisfy Old Man Lynx's hunger, it was no more than he might expect.

Longingly he remembered the old tunnel under the barn-yard fence, and the Boy who always brought him a carrot. Whether it was his nerves, or whether he really saw a pair of gleaming eyes peering down at him from the limb above, at first he could not tell. But finally there was a blood-curdling screech, and Fatty started in spite of his resolve to lie low.

It was indeed Old Man Lynx. That screech was one of his best tricks, dull-eared and short-sighted as he is. For so long as his prey holds perfectly still, he can never be sure whether there is anything there or not. But if the screech makes them jump, then he knows.

In this case Fatty jumped!

The next instant the wood-chuck heard the thud of a heavy body, which had landed on the log directly above him.

XLVIII

THE OLD, OLD CHUCK

Seldom had Fatty Chuck been so frightened as at that moment.

For the lynx had landed on the log directly above him, and it would be but a moment before those great, yellow eyes would be gleaming hungrily into the end of the log at him.

And, while Fatty Chuck would not hesitate to set his teeth in a fox's nose, he somehow knew that it would be no use with an animal as big as Old Man Lynx.

Instead, as his foe leapt for the forward end of the log, he backed out at the rear, and made for a little crevice between two stones.

And there he waited, trembling, while Old Man Lynx sniffed up and down the log, ripping it open with his great barbed claw, and searching disappointedly.

Again he gave his cry,—that blood-curdling screech that made the boldest jump.

But this time Fatty knew his lesson. He had the wit to profit by experience, and when he heard that screech he made neither move nor sound. And Old Man Lynx peered and listened this way and that, but he couldn't see what had become of Fatty.

That danger past, and the lynx well on his way toward another victim, Fatty was for creeping miserably back to his hollow log, when another wood-chuck passed him, going very slowly.

Fatty was so relieved,—though he had always before loved solitude,—that he could scarcely contain his delight.

But the old chuck went straight on as if he had not heard the greeting.

"He must be deaf," thought Fatty, squeaking a little louder, as he followed after. But the old chuck never looked to right nor left. He just crept on, slowly but steadily, till he came to a place where some-one had evidently started to dig a hole not long before,—for the earth was still fresh-smelling, as when first turned.

The old chuck began digging, but he worked so slowly, and stopped so often to nod, that

Fatty thought he must surely fall asleep before he had his hole dug.

Fatty noticed that the poor old fellow was as thin as if it were spring, and he thought to himself if he didn't come out of his winter's sleep pretty early, he'd be reduced to skin and bones. For the wood-chuck does not store nuts like the door-mouse,—he just stores fat.

Suddenly Fatty noticed that the old chuck had not moved for quite a few minutes. He just stood there beside his hole with his eyes closed. Then he toppled over. "Pleasant dreams," cried Fatty, thinking he must be very sleepy.

And because he was so lonely, he crept up and poked his nose into the old fellow's fur.—But what was this? The body was as cold as ice.—And somehow, Fatty knew he would never wake again.

"I guess he was trying to dig his grave," Fatty mused. "Well, well, well, he had lived to a ripe old age, anyway."

Then his ears caught a crunching through the bushes as of some heavy body that didn't

care who heard, and he quickly popped into the vacant hole and pulled the dirt in after him.



XLIX

A TILT WITH TWINKLY EYES

Imagine how Fatty must have felt when he heard that crackling and crunching through the bushes!

No one he had yet met in the woods had made a particle more noise than he could help. Every one had slipped by like a shadow, afraid to attract the tiniest bit of attention. But this creature did not seem to mind who heard him. That meant that he was afraid of no one. And that meant that he was so big that no one could possibly hurt him.

Fatty crouched trembling in the hole left vacant by the tired old wood-chuck. It had been intended for a grave, and the thought was not comforting. Still, it was very much better than having no hole at all to hide in.

But all the same, Fatty felt very far away from home, and he kept his furry ears wide open, as the heavy foot-steps approached.

Presently he was aware of a loud sniffing sound, as if some very large animal were nosing about. And the sniffing came nearer and nearer!

Fatty felt a cold shiver run down his spine, and his fur rose on end.

It was Twinkly Eyes, the little black bear!

Just how Fatty knew this, he could not have told you. As an actual fact, he knew by the odor. For wild folk depend far more on their noses than do human beings. And it was an odor that his mother had pointed out and warned him against, away back in the days when Fatty was a wee little chuck. The memory came back to him, little by little.

And with his memory of the bear came another memory. His mother had told him that bears could dig. And Twinkly Eyes would dig him out of his hole before he could say Jack Robinson!—It was a fearful situation! Especially for a wood-chuck with only one fore-paw to tunnel himself out with!

But Fatty was game. He could think of only one thing to do, and even then he didn't

know if it would work. He would throw a bluff! He would dash madly out on the enemy, gnashing his teeth and squealing at the top of his voice. It had once worked with Barn-yard Tom.

So Fatty did just that. He dashed at the little black bear as if he were going to set his teeth straight into Twinkly's nose.

But alas, the bluff did not work! Twinkly Eyes knew perfectly well that Fatty wouldn't really do it, and he wasn't the least bit afraid. In fact, it only struck him as extremely funny that such a tiny fellow as Fatty Chuck should threaten a great bear like himself. And his little black eyes twinkled more than ever.

The instant Fatty saw that the bear was not going to be frightened in any such manner, he decided it was time to take to his heels.

And take to his little black heels he did, to such good effect that he was clear back to the hollow log before Twinkly quite realized which way he was headed.

But then the little black bear simply gave four great bounds, and he was between the log and Fatty. And he had one paw with its barbed claws raised and ready.

Fatty trembled till his teeth fairly chattered. He didn't seem to have the ghost of a show, but he meant to fight till the end.



L

THE RATTLE-SNAKE

Fatty Chuck was certainly in a tight place. The only hiding place he knew of was the hole in the hollow log, and Twinkly Eyes the bear stood between that and himself.

Moreover, Twinkly had one paw up-raised, with all its curved claws bared and ready for a clutch at Fatty's fur.

For the moment, it didn't seem as if the wood-chuck had a show in the world. (He didn't see the teasing twinkle in the bear cub's eyes.)

Then something un-ex-pect-ed happened. The bear had stepped on a rattle-snake. Straightway the reptile struck at Twinkly's leg, winding himself about it tightly and thrusting his fangs farther in.

With a roar of pain, Twinkly turned his back on the wood-chuck, and gave his whole attention to putting an end to that snake.

It was all over in an instant. At least, so

far as the snake was concerned! For Twinkly snapped his head off in a thrice.

It wasn't over so far as Twinkly Eyes was concerned, because he had to suck his wound and spit out the poison, and then hunt around until he found a healing herb to rub it with.

If he had been a boy instead of a bear, the bite would have been far more serious. But bears' blood is peculiar. A bear can eat stale fish that he finds on the river bank, and be none the worse for it. And he can get stung by wasps and hardly know it the next day. And so he was able to cure the snake-bite, where it might have killed any other animal.

But when he at length remembered Fatty Chuck, that little ad-ven-tur-er was no-where to be found!—He had scampered back to the hole from which he had entered the wood-land the time Frisky Fox was after him. And once inside the little tunnel he had dug on that terrible day, he never even stopped for breath. Soon he was back in his burrow under the barn-yard fence at the Valley Farm.

He would risk Lop Ear, and Barn-yard Tom. He would chance even Frisky Fox's coming back to find him. But he would not

pass another night in the woods! On that he was quite decided!

And my, how happy he was when he found the carrots the Boy had piled up beside his hole! He poked his nose out cautiously, and pulled one into his den. And there he munched and munched and munched, till he could hold no more.

And then he slept.—My how he slept! For it was getting very near the time when Fatty Chuck would go to sleep for the winter. Every morning now the frost was white on the grass, and the maples gleamed red from the edge of the wood-land.

But Fatty had an instinct for getting even fatter before he entered the long sleep. And so one morning, when the grass was still wet with dew, he ventured forth in the sunshine to crop the clover that grew just inside the edge of the corn-field. And that is exactly where he made a big mistake. After all the adventures he had had, he should have been contented to munch the carrots with which the Boy supplied him.

LI

COOPER THE HAWK

Fatty Chuck had certainly had an ad-ven-tur-ous summer. He had had more things happen to him than any other chuck he knew.

But so far he had always come out on top,—except, of course, the time he lost his paw in the rat-trap.

He had escaped the Hired Man's gun. He had come out ahead with Lop Ear the hound and Thomas the barn cat. And he had out-dug Frisky the red fox pup. He had even gotten safely home when Old Man Lynx had chased him. Never in all his life before had he known of a chuck having so many adventures.

But they had all come, directly or indirectly, on the heels of the accident whereby he had lost his paw. And with each adventure he had become a wiser chuck, till now he almost felt that nothing could really happen to him, no matter what he did.

But it is a dan-ger-ous thing for anyone to get to feeling that way, as Fatty was soon to learn.

This morning, as he scampered clumsily along on his short legs for a dessert of clover, he was so sleepy, and so busy thinking about the falling leaves, and the hoar-frost on the ground, that he failed to see a faint shadow that hovered just over-head.

It was Cooper the Hawk, out for his break-fast, too,—and of all things that grow, Cooper loves woodchuck best of all!

Around and around in a graceful spiral, like an air-plane about to descend, went Cooper, his sharp eyes piercing their way to the fat furry form in the clover, and his hooked beak pointing hungrily in the same direction.

Cooper was really as large as Fatty, though he didn't look so,—way up there in the sky. But so light was his mottled vest that even had Fatty chanced to look up at that moment, it is doubtful if he would have noticed anything unusual about the sky. For Fatty lives underground so much that he doesn't depend on his eyes half so much as most folk.

But again, as so often before, the one-

handed wood-chuck had a friend in need. Jimmy Crow was also out getting his breakfast that morning, and the instant he saw the peril Fatty was in, he cawed a warning in a voice as hoarse as it was friendly.

"Look out, Fatty Chuck!" he screamed shrilly. "Run home, quick! Or Cooper the Hawk will get you!"

And Fatty ran!—My, how he ran! His little black heels fairly twinkled behind him.

He reached his burrow not an instant too soon. For the moment he began to run, the hawk began to swoop; and before ever Fatty's heels were out of sight, Cooper was dashing at him with his cruel beak. He did get a pinch of fur out of Fatty's ankle. But he had to let it go at that.

Besides, there was that meddlesome Jimmy crow to chase!

Thus happily ended Fatty's last adventure before his winter's sleep!

LII

OLD MAN LYNX

On and on raced Mammy Cottontail, the little brown hare, through the winter woods. For an early blizzard had turned the world to white.

And after her leapt Old Man Lynx, his broad, furry feet skimming the crust of the drifts like snowshoes. His stub tail thrashed angrily at thought that a mere brown bunny could so elude him. And his green eyes blazed in his square-whiskered old face.

But Mammy, fortunately, had one advantage over her mammoth foe. So large and heavy was Old Man Lynx that where she skimmed like a feather over the light crust, he every now and then sank into some soft drift, which delayed him, till she had put a greater distance between them.

Then, too, his great, cushioned feet were so warm that they melted the snow that clung to their fur, and in time he found himself



"He stopped to bite the snow-balls off his clumsy feet."

trying to run on snow-balls. And that hurt his toes dreadfully.

The third time he stopped to bite the snow-balls off his clumsy feet, Mammy Cottontail managed to get clear out of sight behind a spruce tree. And there she did a flying leap to the Old Stone Wall that lined the Logging Road, and crept into a crevice where Old Man Lynx could not follow, even had he found her there.

"Bully for you, Mammy," called Jimmy Crow, flying just overhead.

For her the night was ended. And as soon as she had caught her breath and removed the tiny snow-balls from between her own warm toes, she settled calmly back to comb the snow from her whiskers, and think the situation over.

She would wait there till daylight, snatching a little sleep in the thick fur robe that she had grown. Then when the pale, yellow sun had crept into the salmon-tinted sky, she would hip-pity-skip away home to the Old Apple Orchard to where she knew the rest of the family awaited her in safety.

Wriggly Nose and Paddy Paws, and Flap

Ears and Furtive Feet, and Fuzzy Wuzz and Hippity Skip, and even Timothy, (now large enough to look out for himself,) each had a special nook under the Old Stone Wall; and their Dad had taught them how to evade even such enemies as Father Red Fox.

Mammy certainly had a family to be proud of!



LIII

THE RED FOX PUP

One day, soon after Frisky's surprise at the first snow, he was puzzled to see a little hummock on the root of an old oak tree, apparently moving about as if changing to a more comfortable position.

Now, snow was uncanny enough in all reason, without knot-holes on trees hopping about that way. And Frisky decided to find out what made this one act so queer. (One reason why he was so wise and clever was because he was always studying out the reasons for things he didn't understand.)

Keeping at a good safe distance till the mystery should be solved, he began circling the tree, amber eyes fastened intently on that little brown hump. But no further movement could he detect.

Then suddenly he got to windward of the thing,—and what do you suppose the ribbon of the breeze told his clever black nose?

"Why, it's Mammy Cottontail!" his nose told him, as plainly as could be.

"What a cam-ou-flage!" he laughed to himself. "Now I'll just simply pretend not to know she is there,—and then she won't get frightened and run away before ever I can tip-toe up behind her."

Thus reasoned Frisky, his eyes dancing at thought of the surprise he would give her.

Now there are always two points of view to a thing. Frisky's only thought was what a good dinner Mammy would make for him. He meant to slip up behind the tree, then dart around the trunk and grab her before she could even take alarm and run.

But to Mammy Cottontail, when her long furry ears caught the soft crunching as the fox tip-toed over the snow-crust, it meant a race for her life!

Thus it was that, just as Frisky's red-brown head, with its yellow eyes and pointed muzzle, peered around the oak tree, Mammy gave one monstrous leap, her long hind legs sending her through the air like a streak of lightning, ears and tail erect and furry feet leaving little scented prints every six feet or so.

It was a silent drama.—Jimmy Crow, watching from his sentinel pine, might have thought it a motion picture, for all the sound they made.

But it was a thrilling race, all the same; and Jimmy screamed encouragement to Mammy in a series of wild caws.



LIV

A RACE TO THE SWIFT

It was certainly a thrilling race, Mammy Cottontail always just about two leaps ahead of Frisky, the red fox pup, and Jimmy Crow cawing for all he was worth.

Mammy's first thought was to find a briar-patch. But the only one she had time to reach was drifted deep with snow.

Her next frightened impulse was to find a barbed-wire fence and leap between the wires, in the hope that Frisky, following close at her heels, would get caught in the barbs. But though she found the stretch of fence that encircled the quick-sand, where she had once got the better of Lop Ear, the snow had drifted so high on either side of it that Frisky merely climbed the drift and leapt the fence.

"Why, oh, why did I come out to sun myself?" Mammy asked herself. "Anyway, I'm glad he's only a pup! I ought to be able to out-wit him, if I can't out-speed him."

And she stared wildly across the wilderness of white, making one of her high ob-ser-va-tion leaps about every seventh jump to see how much Frisky had gained on her, and where to turn next.

On and on she raced, down the much travelled Logging Road, where Frisky might have lost her scent had he been depending on his nose instead of his eyes, and on through the bru-le (the burnt wood), where she leapt first one fallen log and then another in the hope of finding a good hiding place.

But Frisky was too close upon her heels for that.

On and on she sped, till at last she found herself on the bank of Wild River, where always before she had had to turn either to the right or to the left,— since she could not swim,—doubling back through the concealing under-brush. But now the under-brush lay banked with snow.

It was a des-per-ate situation, from Mammy's point of view, and she was just beginning to fear she would never again see faithful, devoted Daddy and wee Timothy,—when something unexpected happened!

Mammy, usually so sure-footed, slipped on the top of the crusted snow-bank that lined the stream. And the next thing she knew, she was skidding straight down to the river!



LV

A HAPPY ACCIDENT

It was a terrifying moment for Mammy Cottontail!

Racing for her life with Frisky close on her trail, she had made the bank of the river, uncertain which way to turn.

Making an ob-ser-va-tion leap, high in air, at the top of the crusted drift, she had slipped on its icy bank, and gone hurtling straight to the River!

And Mammy was a mighty poor swimmer!

Then came something as unexpected as it was fateful. At the very moment when she had thought to feel herself sinking into the icy stream, she came plump upon a surface hard and un-yield-ing.

The thin ice held!

Still, she did not trust it, seeing it stretched above such a current. She would never have risked it had there been a choice. But by a happy accident there was no choice.

With great 10-foot leaps she made for the farther shore.

But the red fox pup was not so fortunate. The thin, new ice that had up-held Mammy's weight was not quite equal to the added strain of his crossing, and in another instant he found himself in the water!

My, how mad he was, through and through, as he felt the icy current about him!

Fortunately, he was not far from the shore he had left, or his adventures would have ended speedily.

Striking out as if his life depended on it,—as indeed it did,—he turned back to the bank, unheeding the crust of ice which broke before him, cutting jagged wounds in his sides.

After about four strokes he came to the thicker ice that had formed on the quiet water along the shore; and on to this he just managed to scramble by digging his claws into it without mercy.

Now if there is one thing more than another that a fox detests, it is getting wet. In that he is cat-like. He especially dreads getting his great red brush of a tail in the water, for then it is heavy and impedes his progress.



Young Frisky, therefore, lost all interest in the rabbit hunt in his zeal to speed away home and dry his fur.

Mammy Cottontail had won out again!

Jimmy Crow, who had followed the race, and now sat perched in the top of a spruce tree, called down his con-grat-u-la-tions.

"What did I tell you, friend?" he cawed a bit proudly. "Never say die till you're dead."

Then Jimmy flew back to the hill beside Pollywog Pond, to see how it was going with Frisky Fox.



LVI

MADAM WOOD HARE

Mammy now found herself in a strange new part of the woods.

Hiding, trembling, under a juniper bush, she waited till mid-afternoon, before her heart stopped ham-mer-ing at her ribs.—Then, circling back to the River, she found to her dis-may that the ice had softened, till there was nothing but a scum of floating mush to cross on.—She could never get back the way she had come!

Where could she conceal herself from the many foes that might want rabbit for supper?

She cast bulging eyes down the frosty aisles of trees.—Mercy! What was that strange scent on the wind?—(A scent too faint for human nose to tell, yet warning enough for a bunny.)

No time now to explore!—She must hide at once!—And with ter-ri-fied leaps she was back under the juniper bush, where at least nothing could come on her from above.

For half an hour she crouched there. Then, so sud-den-ly that she started in spite of herself, she heard a loud thump, thump-thump right behind her!

"Who are you?" the thumping heels of the new-comer sig-nal-led.

Then came a louder, angrier thump, three times repeated, which in rabbit code said as plainly as words:

"Well, I like your nerve!—Clear out of my camp if you don't want to get hurt!"

"I have first right to that juniper bush, and if you don't vacate in just three shakes of your left hind foot, you are going to get in bad with me!"

She had, without a doubt, stumbled upon the home of some other bunny. But where could she go if she did clear out? These were strange woods, and they were full of enemies. Should fox or weasel chase her, where could she hide?

Rolling her eyes around plead-ing-ly at Madame Wood Hare, she had just about decided that it was safer to chance the anger of her un-will-ing hos-tess, when the new-comer gave her a surprise.

Leaping straight at Mammy's head, Madame Wood Hare gave her such a blow across the nose with her long hind feet that Mammy whimpered with the pain of it.

Of course Mammy had to vacate.

And before ever the owner of the form under the juniper bush could give her a second blow, the little brown hare was darting away in long, tired leaps through the wind-swept woods.

There was a patch of willow shrub by the river, and Mammy would have liked to wait for night-fall and make a dinner off the tender tips. But she was not long in finding out why Madame Wood Hare had turned her out. It was because she needed her own house to hide in!—and that in a hurry!



LVII

THE TRAIL OF THE WEASEL

Madame Wood Hare certainly needed her own home to hide in!

For not far back in the woods, Mammy came across a trail that was new to her,—a delicate, lacy trail with the tiny, sharp-toed foot-prints of some long, slim creature with nails that could climb a tree-trunk.

And clinging fresh to these foot-prints was the musky scent of a flesh-eater.

Mammy's teeth chattered with fright. It was un-doubt-ed-ly the trail of a weasel, most dreaded of all her enemies!

Yes, there could be no mistake about it,—here the tiny trail ran straight up a tree-trunk, and a blood-stained feather on the ground beneath told its own story of a chick-a-dee's nest left empty.

Then,—high in the tree-tops,—came the sudden chat-ter-ing of a ter-ri-fied squirrel. —Good! The squirrel had reached his hole, presenting a mein of such fierce long teeth

that the weasel must have hesitated as to whether it was quite worth while.

What should Mammy do? For the weasel might at any moment see her leaping through the snow, or cross her trail,—and then it would surely be all up with her!

Mammy Cottontail watched breathlessly while the weasel ran along the inter-lacing branches, soundless as a shadow, his winter coat like the snow that frosted the winter woods.

His slender body ended in a tiny wedge-like face with ears laid back flat, and eyes gleaming red with murder.

Mammy crouched trembling behind a tree-trunk, her round eyes all but starting from their sockets. For even as the weasel glided snake-like along the limb, he peered this way and that through the gathering twi-light.

But he was after the gray squirrel, who now faced him from his hole with teeth bared in an angry "Chir-r-r" sounding in-ces-sant warning.

The weasel, with a hiss, snapped his jaws at the squirrel's nose,—while the squirrel, fighting for his life, clamped his long front

teeth through the weasel's jaw. But the weasel was the larger, stronger animal.—What followed turned Mammy's heart sick within her.

The victor in the unequal contest did not even have the excuse of being hungry. He had killed merely for the love of sport. And the gray squirrel stretched limp on the ground beneath, he left it lying untasted.

That kind of killing was new to Mammy Cottontail's experience. And she knew that in a race with a weasel *she* would stand even less of a chance of escape.

Then—her blood froze with a terror greater than she had yet known!—The weazel had found HER trail!

Yes, sir, Mammy's blood fairly froze, as the weazel crossed her trail!

Equally useless to run or fight, she knew it to be,—though she could die trying!

But even as she hes-i-tat-ed, an amazing thing happened.

It was by now quite dark, and the stars were pricking through the curtain of the sky. From away up in the top of a scraggly fir tree, at this instant, came a long, weird cry.

"Wa-hoo! Wa-hoo! Whoo! Whoo! Whoo!"

It was Whoo Whoo, the great horned owl, his feathers now white like the snow. (For even he was pro-tect-ive-ly colored, changing his coat from bark-brown to snow-white every winter.)

Mammy Cottontail shrank back into the snow-bank.

Then—the owl swooped toward the weasel!



LVIII

ONE FOE AGAINST ANOTHER

Yes, sir! Mammy Cottontail saw with amazement that one enemy was to be played off against the other.

The great white owl was swooping straight toward the weasel, yellow claws bared for a grip in that writhing back, and beak clicking angrily, perhaps at memory of some time when the snake-like one had killed the baby owls.

A fierce old warrior was Whoo Whoo, the horned owl, with body as long as the weasel's and a great deal heavier. On silent wings the great bird dropped to the back of the white-furred little murderer sniffing at Mammy's trail. And the weasel turned to face his ancient enemy, with teeth bared in a hiss.

There was a whirl of white,—ghost-like in the gray gloom,—then a wild mingling of clacks and hisses,—and a great pair of white wings rose silently, high above the tree-tops.

Their owner clung with beak and claws to a writhing, wriggling, snake-like body in white fur. But the weasel also clung around the great bird's neck, tearing at his shoulder with his teeth, and clawing at the feathery sides with his sharp toe-nails.

Mammy Cottontail did not wait to see how the struggle ended,—though Jimmy Crow told her the next day. The Horned Owl had won, reaching at last to the weasel's heart with his great steel claws, and finally de-vour-ing him for supper, with much dis-card-ing of the white fur in pellets that he spat out upon the ground below.

No, Mammy Cottontail did not wait to see which of her foes came out ahead! The instant she saw her two enemies pitted the one against the other, she made off up-stream as fast as ever she could go. And at last she found a place where the river was frozen a little harder, so that she could cross on the thin ice and make for her home in the Old Apple Orchard.

And for several weeks there-after she was quite content with nibbling anything that

came her way,—bark and twigs and frozen grasses, which could be had near home.

Then one night,—a mild one for February,—she caught a wonderful odor. It was the odor of cabbage that was being thrown to the chickens at the Valley Farm. And so long had she fared on tasteless bark that she determined to have a leaf of that cabbage.

She knew it was a rash resolve, for there was Lop Ear the Hound, and Barn-yard Tom, and the Hired Man who carried a gun. But the wind was blowing that lus-cious odor straight to her now, and she simply could not resist.



LIX

A VISIT TO THE FARM

The cabbage the Boy was throwing to the chickens had been frozen, but that made no difference to Mammy Cottontail. It was a delicious odor for a brown bunny just the same.

Her mouth watered at the thought of how a leaf would taste. How long the winter had been, with its cold and hunger and its fear of death, as one enemy after another had tried to catch her! And memories came of the long, happy summer in the cabbage patch in the clearing, when she and Timothy had feasted fat all day long, hiding under the giant leaves. There, not even the Boy from the Valley Farm could find her, when she chose to play hide and seek.

Wriggling her little black nose this way and that to sniff, she ventured around the Old Orchard Wall, where once more she had taken up her quarters, and across the snow that had drifted over the barn-yard fence.

It was a cheery scene. Not only were the chickens clacking over the unexpected meal of green stuff, but the cows and sheep and horses in the barn were munching and crunching and enjoying their suppers hugely, as the Boy passed from one stall to another.

Even Tom and Lop Ear had their bones, which they crunched with much growling and spitting and licking of chops as they eyed one another sus-pi-cious-ly.

Mammy Cottontail crept just behind the gate-post, and there she crouched, so motionless that the Boy had to look twice before he realized that she was not just a little hunk of cord wood.

When he did spy her, he tossed a juicy cabbage leaf her way

This was too much for Mammy. She knew she ought to wait till Lop Ear had eaten and gone away. But the best of us are bound to be rash sometimes, and there is nothing much harder than to watch others eating when you are hungry.

Mammy crept a little nearer.

Now the door to the cow stable was opened, and the milking pails brought forth.

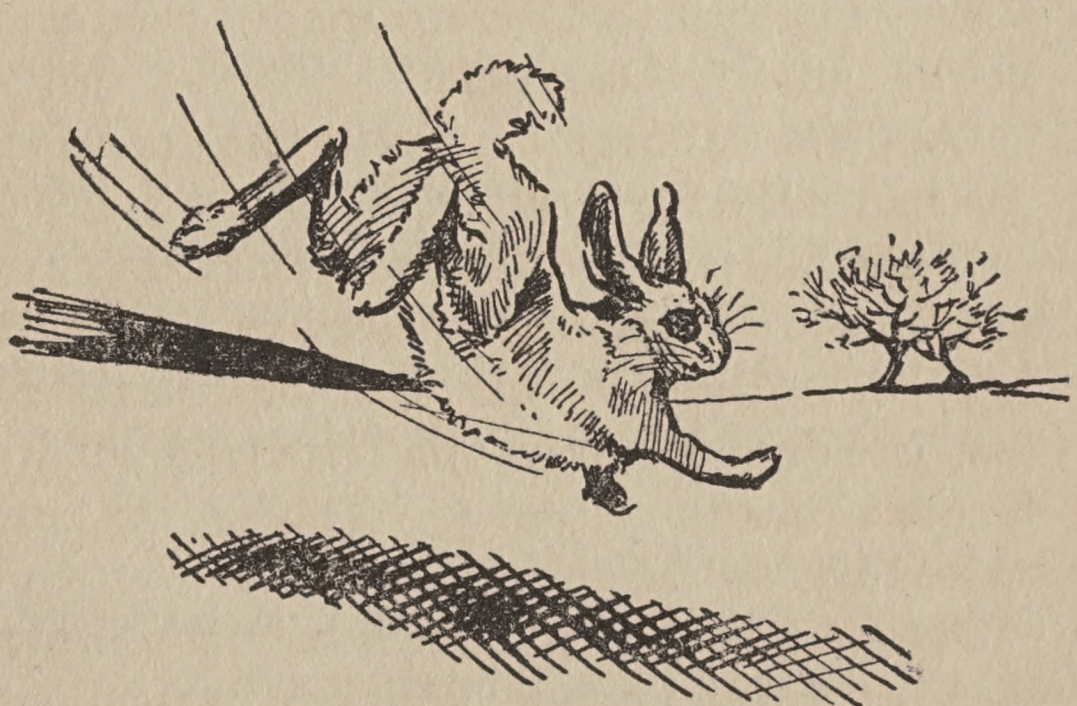
The cat, at least, had gone,—though just where, Mammy had not seen.

"Isn't it mild this evening Father?" the Boy asked, as the Farmer came down to pitch hay for the horses. "Wish I could drive the cows outside, where it is lighter, while we milk them!"

"Well, why don't you?" the Farmer asked, gazing off at the red glow of the mid-winter sunset.

And the next thing Mammy knew, the six red cows were trampling the snow in the pasture between her and her orchard.

She was fairly surrounded!



LX

A HAPPY ENDING

Yes, sir, Mammy Cottontail had no sooner reached forward for that cabbage leaf than she found her way cut off on every hand!

On one side was the barn, on the second the circle of cows, while on the third her escape was cut off at this moment by Barn-yard Tom, whom she spied creeping toward her along the top of the fence. In the only direction left, the Hound sprang forward with a bay of delight as Mammy made a wild dash in the only direction left!

(And the cabbage not yet tasted for which she had risked her safety!)

If she had not been faint from hunger, she might have ventured a straight-away race with Lop Ear. But she was weak and famished, and besides, the snow had covered all her favorite hiding places. Things certainly looked bad for Mammy Cottontail!

Then, so swiftly that she was only a brown blur on the landscape, Mammy turned and

darted straight between the legs of the six red cows!

Now the cows hated Lop Ear. Distrusting him at best, when he came baying at them full-tilt after Mammy, they over-turned the milk pails and gathered in a circle with lowered horns.

"Here! Down! Home with you!" the Farmer commanded Lop Ear. And the spotted Hound, afraid to disobey, gave up the chase, and slunk crest-fallen back to the farm-house porch, where he sulked with his nose between his paws, while Mammy made good her escape.

That night the Boy followed her tracks with a lantern, clear to the Old Stone Wall. And there he left her one of the frozen cabbages!

And for many nights thereafter he treated the Cottontail family to the frozen vegetables his father was throwing to the pigs. In fact, he continued his attentions till spring had once more spread her feast of plenty for Mammy and her brood.

(THE END.)

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